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Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2017/228 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA), the Working Group takes stock in the report of the work done so far and reflects on the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. In this respect, the report provides information on issues emerging from the implementation of SNA, in particular the outcome of the meeting of the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts, progress with the research agenda on practical issues concerning the implementation of the 2008 SNA and an update on the finalization of publications supporting the implementation of the 2008 SNA. It also contains the programme of work of the Working Group and of the regional commissions, an update on the scope and timeliness of the implementation of SNA at the country level and an update on the international coordination of regional and global data collection and data exchange activities. The Commission is invited to express its views and provide guidance on the elements of the programme of work of the Working Group.

Points for discussion by the Commission are contained in paragraph 44 of the report.

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I. Introduction

1. At its forty-eighth session, held in New York from 7 to 10 March 2017, the Statistical Commission adopted decision 48/111 (see E/2017/24, chap. I.B), in which it:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts,[1] expressed its appreciation for the activities undertaken by the members of the Working Group, the regional commissions, other regional organizations and countries to facilitate the implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 and supporting statistics, and endorsed the programme of work of the Working Group and the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts for 2017;

(b) Expressed its appreciation for the progress made in resolving research issues related to the implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008, noted the emergence of some conceptual issues that extend beyond the System of National Accounts 2008 and requested the Working Group to report to the Commission at its forty-ninth session on progress in addressing those issues, taking into consideration the integration of economic, social and environmental statistics and frameworks for measuring progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(c) Expressed its appreciation for the guidance provided on issues emerging from the implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008, including the completion of several manuals, handbooks and guidelines, and urged the Working Group to continue to give priority to practical guidance on issues that would facilitate the implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008;

(d) Encouraged international agencies to speed up the work to set up secure data sharing mechanisms between countries to address asymmetries in cross-border flows and positions arising from the globalization of production, trade and financing;

(e) Welcomed the progress made in implementing the System of National Accounts 2008, expressed concern at the relatively low level of compliance with the minimum required data set, urged those countries with a low level of compliance to develop basic source data for the compilation of national accounts that are policy — relevant and fit for purpose, and in this regard called upon the global and regional agencies to provide a focused, funded and coordinated programme not only on national accounts but also on integrated household and business statistics, in support of the compilation of national accounts;

(f) Noted the progress of the Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) data transmission mechanism for national accounts, and recognized that the implementation of the SDMX protocols by countries will facilitate data transmission and thereby significantly reduce the response burden in submitting data to international organizations.

2. In section II of the present report, developments over the past 10 years, since the adoption of the System of National Accounts 2008 (2008 SNA) are presented. Section III provides an overview of the progress of work on issues emerging from the implementation of SNA, in particular the outcome of the meeting of the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts, the progress made with regard to the research agenda on practical issues concerning the implementation of the 2008 SNA and an update on the finalization of publications supporting the implementation of the 2008 SNA. In section IV, an overview is provided of the activities on national accounts and supporting statistics of the members of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts and of the regional commissions. Section V contains an update of the scope and timeliness of the implementation of SNA at the country level. Progress

[1] E/CN.3/2017/13.

on the coordination of data collection and data exchange activities is contained in section VI. Points for discussion are set out in section VII.

II. 10 years since the adoption of the System of National Accounts 2008

A. Where the Statistical Commission stands

3. The forty-ninth session of the Commission marks 10 years since the adoption of the 2008 SNA as the updated international statistical standard for the compilation of national accounts. This calls not only for celebration but also for reflection on the progress made with regard to the implementation of the 2008 SNA at the country level; and on whether the 2008 SNA remains relevant for measuring new developments in the economy as well as the new socioeconomic phenomena relevant for the policy framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

4. Since the adoption of the 2008 SNA, the Commission has mandated an implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics. The implementation programme has the dual objective of assisting countries in developing the statistical and institutional capacity to make the conceptual change over to the 2008 SNA and to improve the scope, detail and quality of the national accounts and supporting economic statistics.

5. The efficiency and sustainability of the implementation of the 2008 SNA rest on three agreed principles, namely, strategic planning; coordination, monitoring and reporting; and improving statistical systems. The principles are operationalized through: (a) the use of national strategies for the development of statistics as the strategic planning framework; (b) the programme information structure built around the statistical production process, scope and compliance for the national accounts and supporting economic statistics; (c) the modalities of statistical capacity-building through training and technical cooperation, the publication of manuals and handbooks, research and advocacy; and (d) the stages of implementation leading to the change over to the 2008 SNA.

6. Once the global implementation programme of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics had been adopted by the Commission, the Working Group concluded that the best way to execute the global initiative was through a light coordination mechanism that would allow individual Working Group members, the regional commissions and other regional organizations to pursue their own programmes for SNA implementation.

7. Over the past 10 years, the Working Group members, in collaboration with the regional commissions and other regional partners, have embarked on several initiatives towards the implementation of SNA. Examples of assistance include advisory missions to countries, in-country and regional training courses, in-country and regional workshops and fellowships that have allowed national accountants to be able to participate in the events. In addition, national statistical offices have supported other countries (peer learning) and collaborated with international organizations and bilateral donors to fund activities in some countries. In collaboration with the regional commissions and other regional partners, the Working Group has developed and updated at least 35 handbooks on the implementation of the 2008 SNA, providing guidance that ranges from basic compilation techniques to more complex subjects.

8. Eurostat continuously supports its member States and candidate countries in implementing the European System of Accounts and provides assistance to North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean countries.

9. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) provides capacity development activities through headquarters-led missions, its 10 regional technical assistance centres and externally funded capacity-building projects, including technical assistance to develop related source data.

10. Issues affecting States members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are addressed at the annual OECD meetings on national accounts and financial statistics. In assisting SNA implementation in developing countries and countries in transition, OECD works with new and prospective members.

11. The World Bank provides financial support to developing countries through its suite of trust funds, including the Statistics for Results Facility Catalytic Fund, the trust fund for statistical capacity-building and the STATCAP lending programme. These support mechanisms are available to countries for the improvement of their statistical systems in general and are frequently used to address the specific prioritized needs of countries with regard to implementation of the 2008 SNA.

12. The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat collaborates closely with the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and other regional partners to support SNA implementation. Development Account projects are in place in various regions to strengthen the statistical capacity in national accounts and related source data through multi-year programmes. The technical assistance and training activities of the Division and the regional commissions are aligned with these projects.

13. An analysis of replies to the United Nations national accounts questionnaire over the past 10 years shows noticeable progress with regard to the reporting of national accounts data. The conceptual compliance with either the 1993 or 2008 SNA increased from 97 countries in 2007 to 176 countries in 2017, with 79 countries having implemented the 2008 SNA at the end of 2017. The timeliness of the reporting also improved, with 112 countries being able to submit data for the latest reporting year (i.e., 2016) in 2017, while only 69 countries had been able to do so in 2007. Assessing the scope of national accounts data using the minimum required data set shows that countries reporting data in accordance with the data set increased from 50 in 2007 to 102 in 2017.

14. Despite solid progress, too many countries are lagging in their implementation of SNA. The lack of progress in establishing a sustained production and dissemination process for national accounts is reflected in the following ways: (a) countries not reporting their national accounts data on a regular and timely basis; (b) countries not meeting the minimum scope of reporting national accounts data; (c) a lack of updated base years, with only 102 countries compiling volume measures using base years from 2010 onwards; and (d) a lack of international comparability, with some countries still applying the 1968 SNA. Moreover, only 113 countries are compiling quarterly data.

15. At its forty-third session, the Commission reviewed a report prepared by a Friends of the Chair group (see E/CN.3/2012/5) on the slow progress made with regard to implementing SNA and producing national accounts of sufficient scope and detail. The Commission agreed that limited political support and the unavailability of requisite basic economic statistics were the main barriers to the implementation of SNA in a range of countries and that the lack of requisite basic statistics could be addressed by considering the national accounts implementation programme in the broader context of the development of economic statistics. At its forty-eighth session, the Commission expressed concern at the relatively low level of compliance with the minimum required data set and urged countries with a low level of compliance to

develop basic source data for the compilation of national accounts that were policy relevant and fit for purpose.

B. Next steps

16. Over the past 10 years, the world has been confronted with ever-increasing globalization and digitalization, reflecting the fast transformation of many economies. In addition, with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there has been a need to address issues related to measures of sustainability and economic well-being, with an increased focus on household income, consumption, saving and wealth, including their distribution across household groups, the valuation of natural resources and better capturing of informal activities. These developments certainly encourage a reflection on how to maintain the relevance of the SNA framework in addressing such issues.

17. Various researchers and policy analysts have expressed concerns about the way in which issues such as globalization and digitalization are being addressed in SNA, from both a theoretical perspective and a practical measurement point of view. Although the conceptual framework of SNA has proved to be robust and resilient, it is also clear that these issues pose a number of challenges, especially globalization and digitalization when they become intertwined. Furthermore, the continuous debate over whether to move beyond gross domestic product (GDP) requires better reflection on issues related to sustainability and well-being, both within the central framework of national accounts and in the form of additional satellite accounts with a more elevated status.

18. Guidance has been developed on ways to deal with globalization, including by measuring global production arrangements; enhancing the international profiling of large and global enterprises and data-sharing to address asymmetries; developing satellite accounting frameworks for global value chains; and elaborating new trade related measures such as trade in value added through global tables. Work has also progressed with regard to providing further guidance on recording and measuring digitally related activities and in setting up a satellite account type of framework for describing (the impact of) the digital economy. Additional research has also been conducted in the field of sustainability (e.g., the measurement of natural resources and human capital), and well-being (e.g., distributional information for household income, consumption, saving and wealth, and the development of guidance on recording and measuring unpaid household activities and volunteer work). Moreover, continuous efforts have been made to improve the price and volume measurement within SNA and to better capture the informal sector. Progress has also been made in capturing and monitoring (financial) risks and vulnerabilities.

19. In recognizing the importance of communication with users, including the media, and the challenges posed by the effects of new economic phenomena, it is clear that increased effort and guidance should be focused on addressing these communication difficulties. For example, few users appreciate that the national accounts comprise a rich source of information that is well beyond that offered by GDP. Communication and outreach strategies with detailed explanations on ways to promote additional statistics could be considered as an initial step. The promotion of ongoing dialogue with the main users of national accounts statistics would help to identify data needs and promote the appropriate and more exhaustive use of already available data.

20. Although priority has been given to practical guidance and to resolving methodological issues that facilitate the implementation of SNA, it is foreseen that, for a limited number of priority areas of research, discussion papers will be developed

to provide complementary guidance to SNA on the clarification and interpretation of issues within and beyond the 2008 SNA.

III. Guidance on issues emerging from the implementation of the System of National Accounts

A. Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts

21. The eleventh meeting of the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts was held in New York from 5 to 7 December 2017. The main purpose of the meeting was to consider how to advance the research agenda and how to develop guidance to facilitate the implementation of SNA on issues such as globalization, the digital economy, accounting for pensions, Islamic finance, the harmonization of balance of payments and national accounts data and the distributional aspects of income, consumption and saving. Highlights of the meeting included the agreement reached by the Advisory Expert Group on the identification of priority areas for further research to better account for the drivers of economic growth and sustainability, namely, globalization, digitalization, and well-being and sustainability. The Advisory Expert Group also resolved issues related to accounting for pensions and the treatment of negative interest.

22. While focusing on issues related to the practical implementation, clarification and interpretation of the 2008 SNA, the Advisory Expert Group reconfirmed that, at present, there was not any interest in updating the 2008 SNA. However, it noted that resolving some of the emerging issues related to globalization and the digitalization of the economy might extend beyond the recommendations of the 2008 SNA.

23. It is inevitable that the 2008 SNA will need to be updated at some point in the future to ensure its relevance. It is therefore important to advance the research agenda of the 2008 SNA through broad consultation among key stakeholders, such as statisticians, policymakers and representatives of academia; data users; and accounting standard boards. A Working Group task force will be established to formulate the way forward for the aforementioned priority areas of research, which will include the preparation of discussion papers and broad consultations with stakeholders.

24. Noting that more than a quarter of the States Members of the United Nations are not able to compile the minimum required datasets for their national accounts, which were set by the Commission as the lowest benchmark for implementing SNA, the Advisory Expert Group recommended that a Working Group task force be established to prepare guidance based on available materials developed by Working Group members and their development partners to support the practical implementation of SNA in countries that are lagging behind.

25. The conclusions of the meeting can be accessed on the website of the Advisory Group (https://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/aeg/2017/M11_Conclusions.pdf) and will also be made available to the Commission in section II.B of the supplement document to the present report.

B. Research agenda on the System of National Accounts

26. Annex IV to the 2008 SNA lists research issues that emerged during the update of the 1993 SNA, for which more extensive consideration was needed than was possible in the course of the update process. The website of the Working Group, hosted by the Statistics Division, includes a webpage dedicated to the 2008 SNA

research agenda and an additional list of the research issues. The webpage is updated to reflect new issues as they emerge and recommendations on existing issues as they are agreed upon. The current issues considered by the Working Group and the Advisory Expert Group focus mainly on the practical implementation, clarifications and interpretation of the 2008 SNA. Issues that extend beyond the recommendations of the 2008 SNA need much more scrutiny and careful consideration. Discussion papers on these issues will be added to a proposed repository for issues for the future update the 2008 SNA.

27. A description of the issues in the SNA research agenda currently under consideration by the Working Group and the Advisory Expert Group is provided in section II of the supplement document. The SNA research agenda is available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/research.asp.

C. Manuals and handbooks

28. The Working Group facilitates the development of guidance on the compilation of national accounts and supporting statistics in order to strengthen statistical capacity for compiling national accounts. Handbooks containing the guidance are available on the Working Group website.[2] The following nine handbooks were completed during 2017: *Supply, Use and Input-Output Tables with Extensions and Applications* (United Nations); *Satellite Account on Nonprofit and Related Institutions and Volunteer Work* (United Nations); *Quarterly National Accounts Manual* (IMF); *Overview of GDP Flash Estimation Methods* (Eurostat); *Understanding Financial Accounts* (OECD); *Compilation Guide on Inventories* (Eurostat and OECD); *Compilation Guide to Analyze Natural Resources in the National Accounts* (IMF); *Handbook on Rapid Estimates* (Eurostat and United Nations); and *Handbook on Cyclical Composite Indicators* (Eurostat and United Nations). A detailed list of completed publications, publications in progress and planned publications is provided in section III of the supplement document.

29. There is a growing demand for compiling satellite accounts, particularly those that provide a more detailed description of specific economic functions or themes, including interaction with and the impact on the economy at large. Examples include satellite accounts for education and training, health, tourism, transport, aviation, non-profit institutions, culture and the ocean economy. The satellite accounts typically involve some rearrangement and/or further breakdown of the central classifications and the introduction of complementary elements that are relevant for the theme under consideration. However, the satellite accounts could also introduce concepts and definitions that are alternative to the ones applied in the 2008 SNA.

30. Satellite accounts also provide a flexible framework in which to address major conceptual questions on the measurement of the new production arrangements resulting from globalization and the digitalization of the economy as well as on measures of sustainability and well-being. Examples of the satellite accounts include the extension of the production boundary (e.g., unpaid household activities and volunteer work); the extension of the asset boundary (e.g., human capital); and the environment (Environmental-Economic Accounting).

31. The proliferation of satellite accounts calls for a more strategic and global approach to their compilation, taking into consideration the priority areas of the SNA research agenda. Accordingly, the Working Group will give the highest priority to satellite accounts on globalization, digitalization, and measures of well-being and sustainability, which could facilitate resolving or providing information on major

[2] https://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/pubsDB.asp?pType=4.

research issues including those beyond the 2008 SNA. The development and compilation of other functional satellite accounts would then primarily be the responsibility of the relevant area specialists. More specific guidance on the compilation of such accounts could be developed under the auspices of the Working Group.

IV. Work programmes of the members of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts and of the regional commissions

32. The Working Group and the regional commissions continue to support the implementation of SNA and other internationally agreed standards in economic statistics in accordance with the global implementation programme of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics. As such, these activities cover various aspects of the statistical production process for national accounts as reflected in the various training workshops and seminars organized by the members of the Working Group members and the regional commissions.

33. A summary of activities related to economic statistics and national accounts, undertaken in 2017 and to be undertaken in 2018, by the members of the Working Group and the regional commissions is provided in section IV of the supplement document.

V. Reporting of annual national accounts data

34. In accordance with the request of the Commission, the Statistics Division regularly evaluates the availability and scope of official national accounts data reported by Member States and their conceptual compliance with the recommendations of the 2008 SNA. Although the need for quarterly national accounts data to facilitate appropriate policy responses is recognized in the minimum required data set, they are only available for some 113 countries. Only the availability and scope of official annual national accounts data are therefore evaluated. The assessment provided in the present section is based on replies received to the United Nations national accounts questionnaire over the past five reporting periods (2012–2016).

35. National accounts data are reported by most Member States (95 per cent), although about 15 per cent do not report every year and 5 per cent have not reported at all for the past five reporting periods. Evaluating the timeliness of the reporting of national accounts data shows that about 60 per cent of Member States are able to submit data with a time lag of less than one year. The share is 82 per cent of Member States when considering submissions with a time lag of less than two years.

36. In terms of conceptual compliance, the 1993 SNA or the 2008 SNA have been implemented in over 90 per cent of Member States. The cut-off date for submitting the United Nations national accounts questionnaire is August of each year. In August 2017, 79 Member States had implemented or partially implemented the 2008 SNA in the compilation of their national accounts. All of the developed economies, the economies of the Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian regions and 88 per cent of developing economies had reported national accounts data according to either the 1993 SNA or the 2008 SNA methodology. The share of the least developed countries and small island developing States that had implemented either the 1993 or the 2008 SNA remained at 81 per cent and 95 per cent, respectively.

37. The scope of national accounts data is evaluated against a standard minimum requirement data set[3] and the milestone[4] measure. The results of the evaluation show that only 53 per cent of Member States are providing the minimum requirement data set tables. The low level in respect of the scope of national accounts data is mainly due to the lack of reporting on the rest of world accounts, highlighting the need to integrate balance of payments statistics and national accounts. More information on the reporting of national accounts data is provided in section V of the supplement document.

VI. Coordination of data collection and data exchange activities

A. Institutional sector accounts

38. The Group of 20 Data Gaps Initiative has created a major momentum to improve the compilation of quarterly and annual data on institutional sector accounts. This does not only relate to non-financial (current and capital) accounts, but also encompasses financial accounts and balance sheets. Several countries have increased their efforts to compile the relevant data. As part of these ongoing efforts, new data templates for the compilation and collection of institutional sector accounts are in the process of being further developed and agreed. Of particular importance is the broadening of the templates for from-whom-to-whom tables showing the financial interconnectedness between sectors and countries, and data on the extent of shadow banking. The templates will also be discussed in forums beyond the Group of 20 economies.

39. Furthermore, after the successful workshop held in Paris from 10 to 12 April 2017, a second workshop on institutional sector accounts will be held at OECD headquarters in Paris from 14 to 16 February 2018. In addition to the templates referred to above, the main focus of the workshop will be on the exchange of national experiences on sources and methods for compiling sector accounts. As a spin-off from these workshops, OECD will compile a Manual on the compilation of these accounts, to be published in 2019.

B. Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange

40. Continuous efforts are made to extend the use of Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) in the area of macroeconomic statistics. In the past, the Ownership Group for SDMX in Macro-Economic Statistics has taken responsibility for the development and release of global data structure definitions (DSDs) for national accounts (including government finance statistics), balance of payments and foreign direct investment. For these statistics, focus has turned to further promoting the actual use of these structures.

41. A second line of work concerns the development of new global data structure definitions for price indices and for environmental-economic accounts. Data structure definitions for consumer price indices (including the harmonized index of consumer prices) will be released during 2018. In the future, the package will be extended gradually to include definitions for other areas of price statistics. The first results of

[3] The minimum requirement data set is defined in the report of the Task Force on National Accounts (E/CN.3/2007/7) and the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (E/CN.3/2011/6).

[4] The milestone methodology is described in the reports of the Task Force on National Accounts (E/CN.3/1997/12) and Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (E/CN.3/2011/6).

definitions in the area of environmental-economic accounting are expected to become available at the end of 2018.

42. There has also been considerable progress in the implementation of SDMX at the national level. In many cases, the global data structure definitions have been drivers for national implementation projects. Several countries have reported on successful projects during the SDMX Global Conference held in October 2017. However, there is a gap in capacity-building as more work is needed to better target domain and information technology experts in countries.

C. Steering Group on International Data Cooperation

43. At the level of international organizations, under the auspices of the Inter-Agency Group on Economic and Financial Statistics, the international data cooperation project is progressing in terms of the work programme on shared datasets. The first shared dataset on GDP, population and employment was produced in the third quarter of 2015. It is expected that the datasets on non-financial and financial sector accounts will be added during the first half of 2018. Work has also been initiated to share balance of payments data. In addition, notification-based pull mode data collection is envisaged to further streamline the technical framework for sharing data. The developments are fully based on the global SDMX data structure definitions and data exchange standards. One of the main features of the cooperation is the establishment of a clear distribution of responsibilities among participating international organizations in order to ensure that shared datasets are identical across their respective databases.

VII. Points for discussion

44. **The Commission is invited express its views on the following:**

(a) **Developments over the past 10 years since the adoption of the 2008 SNA;**

(b) **Work programme of the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts;**

(c) **Research agenda of the 2008 SNA, in particular the three priority areas, namely, globalization; digitalization; and well-being and sustainability;**

(d) **Development of compilation guidance on the concepts and recommendations of the 2008 SNA in support of its implementation at the national level;**

(e) **Activities of the work programmes of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts and of the regional commissions to provide guidance, training and support for the implementation of SNA;**

(f) **Scope, timeliness and exhaustive measurement of the compilation of national accounts data, including the changeover to the 2008 SNA;**

(g) **Progress in the coordination of data collection and data exchange activities.**

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Report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2017/228, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting. The report describes its new organization of work and elaborates on progress made with the regard to the Committee's medium-term programme of work. The discussion is organized around five areas of work of the Committee, namely, (a) coordination and promotion; (b) methodological development for normative standards and other research; (c) development of databases; (d) implementation of statistical capacity-building; and (e) formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues. The report concludes with points for discussion.

* E/CN.3/2018/1.

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Report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-eighth session, held from 7 to 10 March 2017, the Statistical Commission adopted decision 48/112 (see E/2017/24, chap. I, sect. C), in which it:

(a) Expressed its appreciation for the work of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting in scaling up the implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) to meet the targets set out in the updated implementation strategy and for the Committee's renewed focus on coordination of a global work programme;

(b) Stressed the value of SEEA in measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicators;

(c) Requested that the Committee of Experts continue its work on the development of SEEA-compliant databases which include the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, with international organizations developing estimates in consultation with countries and publishing results only with countries' consent;

(d) Supported the efforts of the Committee of Experts to strengthen capacity-building, which include developing in-depth courses and e-learning on SEEA modules, developing technical guidance documents, including technical notes, developing a knowledge platform and renewing the focus on the coordination of technical assistance at the global level;

(e) Agreed in principle with the proposed priority areas for the advancement of the research agenda for the SEEA Central Framework, and urged the Committee of Experts to support cooperation among all relevant technical groups;

(f) Supported the efforts of the Committee of Experts to update the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting manual by 2020, and encouraged countries to scale up experimentation and testing;

(g) Welcomed the collaboration with the Committee on Statistics and the Tourism Satellite Account of the World Tourism Organization, and requested that a technical note on the link between SEEA and the Tourism Satellite Account be developed as soon as possible;

(h) Encouraged the Committee to develop materials in support of the promotion of SEEA, in particular those raising awareness of its usefulness for policy.

2. The work of the Committee is organized around five broad areas of work, with members of the Bureau leading activities under the related components of the programme of work. The areas of work are: area A. Coordination, led by Statistics Canada; area B. Methodological development for normative standards and other research, divided into two sub-areas: area B1. SEEA Central Framework, led by Statistics Netherlands and area B2. SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, led by Eurostat; area C. Development of databases, led by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); area D. Implementation of statistical capacity-building, led by Statistics South Africa; and area E. Formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues, divided into two sub-areas: E1, focusing on communication, led by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and E2, focusing on SEEA and the Sustainable Development Goals, led by the National

Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI). The present report discusses the progress made during 2017 in carrying out the medium-term programme of work organized according to the broad category areas agreed in the Committee's terms of reference. Points for discussion are presented in section VII.

II. Area A. Coordination

3. Coordination entails ensuring that the various groups and international agencies active in the field of environmental accounting (including methodological development, technical cooperation and development of training, in-country capacity-building and data collection/compilation) work in a coordinated fashion to avoid overlaps of activities. Coordination will be further strengthened through partnerships with relevant international and regional agencies and transparent and open communication on the programme components.

4. A Working Group chaired by Statistics Canada has been established for work in this area. The group is composed of representatives from the statistical offices of Canada (Chair), Australia, Brazil, Mexico, the Netherlands, South Africa, Sweden, the United States of America, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UN Environment and the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat. The Group met by videoconference in November 2017 to agree both on its terms of reference and on priority items which will form the basis for the Group's work programme for 2018.

5. All participating members agreed that the new and evolving website of the Statistics Division should serve as a platform for sharing information on current activities, meetings and events related to environmental-economic accounting and thus support the coordination role of the Working Group. The website will, for instance, play an important role in helping to consolidate knowledge of the various SEEA-related training initiatives carried out around the world, including e-learning, assisted learning and training workshops, and technical assistance activities. A calendar of all meetings, workshops and events related to SEEA will be presented in a "super calendar". Each event will have its own page where more detailed event information, agendas, meeting documents and presentations will be provided. If the event is not organized by the Statistics Division, then the meeting page will be linked to the host organization's event page. This will help furnish a general overview of "who is doing what, where and when" so as to prevent overlap and foster collaboration among different stakeholders. The website will increasingly include new features and tools, for example, for hosting forums and sharing documents. A knowledge base will also be established at the new website.

6. There has been a proliferation of groups and committees active in the area of environmental-economic accounting and related statistics with specific terms of reference and reporting structure. Considering the number of groups working on SEEA and supporting statistics with overlapping memberships, the need has been identified for reviewing the terms of reference of the various groups to ensure the best coordination and the least amount of overlap possible. This exercise will focus on those committees and groups established by the Committee of Experts on Experimental Ecosystem Accounting.

7. Statistics Canada, with support from Group members, will produce a draft work programme for 2018 which will include deliverables, timelines and responsibilities.

III. Area B. Methodological development for normative standards and other research

8. An important component of the work of the Committee is the advancement of the research agenda of both the SEEA Central Framework and SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting. A number of areas related, in particular, to classifications remain to be addressed in the SEEA Central Framework and SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting. Moreover, implementation practices at country level have identified several issues that warrant a systematic discussion. The present section describes the progress of methodological work on the SEEA Central Framework, including its subsystems, and SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting. Special attention will be paid to those issues that pertain to both the SEEA Central Framework and SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, including, for example, the classification of land cover as well as the link between the classification of natural inputs and ecosystem services, so as to ensure full harmonization between the SEEA Central Framework and SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting.

Area B1. SEEA Central Framework

9. The advancement of the research agenda of the SEEA Central Framework and the development of materials to support its implementation have been repeatedly identified by the Statistical Commission as constituting a priority. To this end, the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting established the Technical Committee on the SEEA Central Framework, led by Statistics Netherlands, to address the issues identified during the drafting of the Framework, compilation issues and other issues that arose subsequently as a consequence of implementation in countries. A revised complete list of issues, which also provides a more in-depth outline of the issues identified, has been developed, with a view to advancing the SEEA Central Framework research agenda. The SEEA Central Framework research agenda and workplan were reviewed and prioritized by the Committee of Experts in June 2017. The timeline established to resolve the issues covered by this research agenda extends until 2019.

10. During 2017, progress was made in the following areas: integrated framework for environmental activity accounts (i.e., harmonization of concepts, definitions and classification of environmental protection expenditure accounts, resource management expenditure accounts, environmental goods and services sector accounts, environmental taxes, environmental subsidies and other transfers), a global data structure definitions for Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) purposes, fossil fuel subsidies, economy-wide material flow accounts, approaches to the measurement of adapted goods and input-output techniques. At its twenty-third meeting (17–20 October 2017), the London Group on Environmental Accounting of the discussed many of these issues; the outcomes of those discussions will be consolidated and published on the Statistics Division website.

11. In 2017, work progressed on the testing of the technical notes for water, energy and air emission accounts. A technical note linking SEEA and Tourism Satellite Accounts has been developed and will be tested during 2018. The note will also provide the basis for the development of the framework for measuring sustainable tourism by the World Tourism Organization in collaboration with the Statistics Division. In addition, the SEEA Technical Committee is working in collaboration with various groups and initiatives active in specific areas related to the SEEA Central

Framework. In particular, a subgroup has been established to advance the work in the area of expenditures on biodiversity within the context of the update and revision of the classification of environmental activities.

Area B2. SEEA experimental ecosystem accounting

12. The SEEA implementation strategy, with which the Statistical Commission agreed in principle at its forty-seventh session (see E/2016/24, chap. I, sect. B, decision 47/106, para. (f)), envisages updating SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting by 2020, taking into account the experience accumulated through testing and experimentation initiatives. The Committee has advanced in its work on the revision of SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, to be completed by the end of 2020. A SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting Technical Committee led by Eurostat was established to advance the research agenda and provide technical direction and contributions to the revision of SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting. Research areas and main issues to be addressed have been identified and planning for means of addressing the various revision issues has been developed, building on material provided for discussion to the Committee at its twelfth meeting in June 2017 and incorporating feedback from the SEEA Experimental Economic Accounting Technical Committee meeting in September 2017 and the meeting of the London Group on Environmental Accounting in October 2017.

13. A request for fundraising for the revision of SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting extending beyond national statistical offices has been sent out to members of the Committee of Experts and others who were involved in the Committee's work before. In addition, the Committee members were actively engaged in fundraising activities in their countries. While there has been a strong commitment of countries to supporting the revision of SEEA in kind, funds are still needed for the recruitment of an editor and the experts required to advance issues in the research agenda. Those funds are being raised to complement the funds already committed by Eurostat and a limited number of countries. In addition, the European Union-funded Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project[1] will contribute to the above-mentioned research agenda through the drafting of technical papers and best practice guidance to be tested in the five project partner countries, namely, Brazil, China, Mexico, India and South Africa. The Committee decided to start the revision process while continuing its efforts to raise funds.

14. A research agenda for experimental ecosystem accounting, which was welcomed at the forty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission (see E/2013/24, chap. I, sect. C, decision 44/104, para. e), was subsequently updated during the eleventh meeting of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (New York, 22–24 June 2016). In 2017, the Committee advanced priority areas of the research agenda on the basis of agreed outputs, timelines and deliverables. The identified research issues have been grouped into four main research areas: (a) spatial issues, (b) ecosystem conditions, (c) ecosystem services and (d) accounting treatments and valuation.

15. For each of these research areas, the Committee has agreed to formulate the revision issues through (a) a description of the issue and the key research questions, (b) a discussion of connections between issues, (c) suggestions for the proposed timing of work and approach and (d) initial thoughts on the likely communities of

[1] See https://seea.un.org/home/Natural%20Capital%20Accounting

interest in advancing the research work. A lead author to be appointed for each of these groups will be supported by a small number of contributing authors providing substantive contributions to the resolution of the issues.

16. As part of the revision process, it is anticipated that an international workshop on valuing ecosystem services and assets within the context of natural capital accounting will be organized in April 2018 by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation of Germany, in collaboration with the Statistics Division and UN Environment, to advance the research agenda on valuation. In addition, an expert forum on ecosystem accounting, similar to those held in 2013 and 2015, will be hosted by the Statistics Division in New York in 2018. Both events will benefit from the contribution of the aforementioned European Union-funded Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project and the contribution of the five partner countries. In due course, an editor will be recruited to coordinate the drafting of the revision.

17. The Committee is in the process of finalizing the technical recommendations in support of SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting 2012, taking into account the results received from a number of broad consultations on the various drafts and the final consultation among Committee members. The technical recommendations are expected to be published at the end of 2017.

IV. Area C. Development of databases

18. As recommended by the Statistical Commission at its forty-seventh session (see E/2016/24, chap. I, sect. B, decision 47/106, para. (f)), the Committee of Experts discussed the way forward in the compilation and dissemination of global SEEA-based data sets. It reiterated the urgency of developing a database to support integrated policymaking at national and international levels for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, [2] including monitoring through use of Sustainable Development Goal indicators.

19. At its eleventh meeting in June 2016, the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting stressed the importance of developing SEEA data sets to inform economic and environmental policy, as well as the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. It agreed that a pragmatic approach should be taken, starting with a small set of priority accounts followed by a progressive increase in the number of accounts and level of detail. Based on policy relevance, data availability and resource implications, the following SEEA accounts were identified as priority accounts for the development of global data sets: air emission accounts, energy accounts, economy-wide material flow accounts, land accounts and water accounts.

20. The Committee of Experts stressed the importance of developing global SEEA data sets based on existing national or international data sets, whenever possible. This strategy ensures consistency across data sources and limits the response burden for countries. The basic strategy is to use nationally available data in accordance with the SEEA Central Framework to the extent possible, and to supplement these data with estimates based on internationally available data sources (see below).

21. To facilitate data transmission, several international organizations (Eurostat, FAO, OECD, UN Environment and the Statistics Division) are currently working

[2] General Assembly resolution 70/1.

together on developing and applying the SDMX framework to SEEA accounts. Global data structure definitions for the five priority SEEA accounts are expected to be validated by the SDMX Ownership Group by the end of 2017 and to undergo a testing phase in the first quarter of 2018.

22. As in other statistical areas (e.g., national accounts), countries will have the opportunity to use Excel-based questionnaires with a converter which can generate SDMX files for data transmission. This converter will be supplied by the international organization in charge of data collection.

23. When SEEA accounts are not yet compiled by countries, it is envisaged that international organizations will use, whenever possible, estimation techniques in order to populate the global databases with data for the relevant countries. In order that optimal quality and backing from the countries may be achieved, the resulting estimates, before being disseminated, will be submitted to them for validation. The relevant estimates will also be clearly identified as what they are: *estimates*, not official statistics. Data will be disseminated only with prior consent of the country concerned.

24. SEEA-compliant air emission accounts and energy accounts are two areas where estimation techniques give encouraging results. Estimated air emission accounts for greenhouse gases can be derived from the air emission inventories submitted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,[1] at least for Annex I countries, whereas estimated energy accounts can be derived from the energy balances produced by the International Energy Agency (IEA). In both cases, the estimation methodology will be presented to the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting, for approval. A tool that constitutes a simplified version of the physical energy flow accounts (PEFA) builder developed by Eurostat, has been developed by the Statistics Division to produce energy accounts starting from the IEA energy balances and using default coefficients. Those coefficients can be modified by countries if more detailed data are available. The testing of the simplified PEFA will be initiated in 2018. The methodology for the compilation of energy accounts using the simplified PEFA tool as well as the results of the testing will be discussed in an upcoming expert group meeting.

25. UN Environment and the International Resource Panel have also undertaken work on updating the global material flow database and developing a global manual on material flow accounts which would pave the way for an international data set on economy-wide material flow accounts aligned with SEEA.

26. The Statistics Division plans to disseminate the SEEA-compliant database. It should be noted that country databases will be disseminated only for those countries from which prior approval has been received. The need to strengthen and improve basic statistics remains an important component of countries' work programmes in support of SEEA implementation and beyond.

V. Area D. Implementation of statistical capacity-building

27. In 2017, the Committee conducted the third global assessment of the country-level implementation of SEEA. The aim of the survey was to provide information on the scope of implementation in countries of the SEEA Central Framework and SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting. The 2017 global assessment tracks progress

[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

achieved since the previous assessments (2006 and 2014) and provides data for a gap analysis which will inform the focus of capacity-building initiatives undertaken by various regional organizations. The aim of the capacity-building initiatives remains to enable 100 countries to implement the SEEA Central Framework and 50 countries to implement SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting by 2020, in line with the targets of the SEEA implementation strategy.

28. The 2017 global assessment survey was sent to 193 Member States, and territories as well. As of November 2017, 108 responses had been received, corresponding to a 56 per cent response rate. Of responders, 65 per cent (70 countries) had programmes on environmental-economic accounts, with another 19 per cent (20 countries) planning to start compilation of accounts in the near future. This represents a 30 per cent increase, compared with 2014, in the number of countries with a programme in environmental-economic accounts. Details of the 2017 global assessment are available in a background document.

29. Several initiatives of regional commissions and international agencies have been carried out and initiatives are planned for the short and medium term, to support SEEA Central Framework and SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting implementation in countries. The intention is to use the results from the global assessment survey 2017 to inform those initiatives and secure synergies where possible.

30. Many initiatives focused on using e-learning to develop capacity in countries in 2017. The Statistics Division collaborated with both the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on translating online modules on the SEEA Central Framework into Russian and Arabic, respectively. These online modules serve as part of blended learning initiatives designed to provide an introduction to the SEEA Central Framework. Participants will gain technical knowledge and hands-on experience in the compilation of accounts, as well as experience in support of policymaking. The Division and the regional commissions expect to complete both initiatives in the first half of 2018.

31. The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) and the Economic Commission for Africa have already run the e-learning course on the SEEA Central Framework as part of an effort to extend the number of thematic areas on the SIAP e-learning platform. Approximately 260 participants from Africa and Asia have participated in this online training.

32. To build on the previous e-learning courses on the SEEA Central Framework, the Statistics Division is also developing in-depth modules on water, energy and ecosystems. The SEEA Water and Energy e-learning modules are currently being finalized, and in 2017, the SEEA Central Framework Technical Committee provided technical oversight for both modules, which will be launched as part of blended learning initiatives in 2018. Similarly, the Division completed development of SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting e-learning modules in 2017. The SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting Technical Committee provided technical oversight for the modules and the Statistics Division expects to launch these modules in 2018. All of the e-learning courses are posted on the Division website.[4] A number of e-learning and face-to-face workshops on water, energy and ecosystems will be run in 2018 in various regions of the world.

[4] https://elearning-cms.unstats.un.org/

33. In addition to e-learning, there are several ongoing projects focusing on building capacity and implementing the SEEA in countries. The European Union-funded Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project to advance ecosystem accounting held inception missions for all project countries in 2017. The project includes the development of national plans, pilot SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounts, and development of indicators in the context of international initiatives, as well as initiatives promoting knowledge sharing as a means of enlarging the community of practitioners on natural capital accounting and SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting. A regional workshop on ecosystem accounting with approximately 100 participants from the project countries and other Asian countries was held in China in November 2017.

34. The next meeting of the OECD-Economic Commission for Europe seminar on the implementation of SEEA, which will be held in Geneva on 21 and 22 February 2018, aims at identifying countries' priorities and needs in the context of implementation of SEEA.

35. The World Bank Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services (WAVES) programme, which is also focused on building capacity in natural capital accounting, currently includes the provision of training, workshops and support for institutionalizing natural capital accounting in Botswana, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Indonesia, the Philippines and Rwanda. Further, the second Forum on Natural Capital Accounting for Better Policy (NCA Policy Forum), which was held in The Hague in 2017, focused on how natural capital accounting can be used by government, business and other sectors to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. The Forum was led by the World Bank in collaboration with the Statistics Division and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

36. The Statistics Division concluded a United Nations Development Account ninth tranche project, whose aim was to support Member States in developing and strengthening environment statistics and integrated environmental-economic accounting for improved monitoring of sustainable development. In particular, the accounting component of the project aimed at strengthening institutional and technical capacity of the national statistical offices and the relevant stakeholders of Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia and Uganda. The project included the development of national plans in consultation with national stakeholders and compilation of selected accounts in accordance with countries' priorities and data availability. Indonesia compiled energy and air emissions accounts; Malaysia, water and energy accounts; Kenya, energy accounts; and Uganda, water accounts. Closing regional workshops were held in collaboration with the World Bank and regional commissions and focused on policy applications and dissemination of SEEA.

VI. Area E. Formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues

37. The Committee has identified communication and mainstreaming SEEA in emerging policy discussions, in particular on the Sustainable Development Goals, as an important core activity of the Group. There needs to be proper communication with statistical offices on the compilation of the SEEA accounts, as constituting a new standard. SEEA can be implemented in many countries using available country data held in a diverse number of administrative and other databases. Moreover, SEEA should be used as an organizing framework for existing data, and for identifying data gaps and the need for improving and mainstreaming data gathering within the

statistical production process. SEEA also serves as a tool for bringing together different ministries and working procedures for developing an integrated environmental-economic database. The use of SEEA not just as a statistical organizing framework but also as an analytical and policy framework in support of integrated policy decision-making should be properly communicated to users through practical applications.

Area E1. Communication

38. The management meeting of the Committee in June 2017 was preceded by a seminar designed to assist Committee members in recognizing opportunities for promoting SEEA mainstreaming. It provided the opportunity for Committee members to develop an informed idea of who best to target in promoting SEEA and how to engage them, in particular through the use of context-appropriate messaging and communication tools with target audiences. At the end of the seminar, the Committee had identified multiple concrete entry points, both national and international, for promoting SEEA, as well as potential communication tools for those entry points.

39. The Committee, led by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, finalized an updated communications strategy which builds upon the results of the seminar and facilitates the implementation of SEEA and the mainstreaming of its use in integrated policymaking. The strategy, which has a practical focus, emphasizes consistent core messages adapted to audience needs and interests, so as to influence strategically important stakeholders. The strategy requires that members make personal efforts to promote SEEA, monitor progress through concrete measures and inform the Secretariat on a quarterly basis of progress and achievements. The communications strategy is available in a background document.

40. The new SEEA website launched in September 2017 will be one of the main platforms upon which the communication strategy is to be operationalized. Since this website will be the main means of communication with civil society as well as with other non-technical stakeholders, an accessible approach geared to the general public will be maintained, with technical jargon kept to a minimum.

41. To sustain an informed and committed uptake of SEEA, the Statistics Division, with the assistance of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, will commence coordinated efforts to issue a regular newsletter from early 2018. This newsletter will be an important adjunct to the communications strategy supporting the implementation of SEEA. It will adopt a flexible approach and its aim will be to appeal to multiple audiences by reporting on a variety of topics, including relevant news and events, technical developments, links to policy, case studies of successful SEEA implementation, project progress and relevant contemporary reading. The newsletter will rely upon contributions from member countries. It will be emailed to Committee members, SEEA contact points and other subscribers. In order to reach as many audiences as possible, the newsletter will adopt an accessible style. The new SEEA website will host a sign-up link for the newsletter.

42. The European Union-funded Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project will contribute to the implementation of the SEEA communications strategy through establishing its project website and by developing a knowledge-based platform on the SEEA website. A specific section dedicated to the results of the project will be included in the quarterly SEEA newsletter.

Area E2. SEEA and the Sustainable Development Goals

43. At its twelfth meeting in June 2017, the Committee of Experts reaffirmed the important role of the SEEA in the Sustainable Development Goals policy agenda. Integrated frameworks such as SEEA assess synergies and trade-offs, which will support that agenda. The Committee emphasized the need to work strategically to promote SEEA for the Sustainable Development Goals and formed a group led by INEGI to develop a strategy in that regard. The Committee of Experts recommended that, in the immediate future, Committee members work with custodian agencies of the environmental indicators, in particular UN Environment and FAO. The members of the Committee of Experts, in particular those that are also members of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, should play an active role in ensuring that the Sustainable Development Goal indicators reflect SEEA standards, where appropriate. In particular, the Committee requested that a short list of indicators be developed through which the Committee would have an opportunity to influence the indicator methodology. The Committee of Experts also acknowledged the need for a medium-term strategy to ensure that the Committee would be recognized as the formal mechanism for review of Sustainable Development Goal indicators, which could be informed by SEEA. This medium-term strategy will be developed for presentation to the Committee at its thirteenth meeting.

VII. Points for discussion

44. **The Commission is invited to express its views on:**

(a) **The proposed activities to enhance coordination and prevent overlaps in the development of methodologies and capacity-building on SEEA and supporting statistics (sect. II);**

(b) **The proposed process to advance the research agenda of the SEEA Central Framework and the revision of SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (sect. III);**

(c) **The process for initiating a global database on the SEEA Central Framework, emphasizing the needs for developing and strengthening basic data in support of the accounts and beyond (sect. IV);**

(d) **The capacity-building activities and strategy focused on e-learning, face-to-face hands-on workshops and country technical support (sect. V);**

(e) **The communication strategy and the proposed activities for the promotion of SEEA for the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, where appropriate (sect. VI).**

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Item 3 (i) of the provisional agenda*
Items for discussion and decision: statistics for economies based on natural resources

Report of the Ulaanbaatar Group on Statistics for Economies based on Natural Resources

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2017/228 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Ulaanbaatar Group on Statistics for Economies Based on Natural Resources. The report presents the draft of the handbook on Statistics for Economies based on Natural Resources, following global consultations. The Commission is invited to discuss the report and adopt the "Handbook for compiling statistics for economies based on natural resources" as international guidelines for the production of statistics covering mining and related activities.

* E/CN.3/2018/1.

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Report of the Ulaanbaatar Group on Statistics for Economies Based on Natural Resources

I. Introduction

1. The joint initiative between Mongolia and Australia to establish the Ulaanbaatar Group on Statistics for Economies Based on Natural Resources was endorsed by the Statistical Commission at its forty-third session, held in New York from 28 February to 2 March 2012 (see E/2012/24, chap. I.B, decision 43/108).

2. The primary goals of the Ulaanbaatar Group are to develop methodological and practical guidelines on statistical measurements for economies based on natural resources. The Group makes recommendations by establishing best practices in respect of concepts and methods to track mining industry activities and investments in mining, to accurately measure the mining industry's contribution to the economy; and to assess the impacts of mining on other social and economic sectors within the framework of the System of National Accounts. In addition, the Group aims to collaborate with countries that have economies based on natural resources and to develop practical recommendations on measuring the impacts of mining on the environment and on ensuring the comprehensiveness, reliability, accuracy, timeliness and comparability of relevant statistical data.

3. The Group last reported to the Statistical Commission at its forty-eighth session, in March 2017. At that session, the Commission: "(a) Welcomed the report of the Ulaanbaatar Group on Statistics for Economies Based on Natural Resources; (b) Agreed with the proposed plan of work to finalize the handbook on statistics for economies based on natural resources, including the conduct of a global consultation, and stressed that the work should be completed before the forty-ninth session of the Commission so that the Commission may consider the handbook for endorsement in 2018; (c) Supported the use of the draft handbook in the production of statistics on mining and in the analysis of its impact on the economy, the environment and broader society, and stressed the importance of the availability of different language versions; (d) Considered that the original mandate of the Ulaanbaatar Group will be completed after the endorsement of the handbook in 2018, unless a concrete proposal is made to extend the mandate of the Group to include, for instance, other types of natural resources" (decision 48/116).

II. Key outputs

4. The main output of the group is the "Handbook for compiling statistics for economies based on natural resources", the main purpose of which is to enable national statistical offices to produce a suite of statistics that would be beneficial to decision makers.

5. In line with Commission decision 48/116 (see above) the Ulaanbaatar Group conducted a global consultation between August and October 2017. A total of 25 national statistical offices replied. All comments were integrated into the draft Handbook, and an updated and final draft was presented to the Commission as a background document.

6. A glossary for the Handbook, which was developed on the basis of work by Mexico, was further updated and provided by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

7. The key users of the Handbook will be the national statistical offices using it as a guideline to produce a suite of statistics covering mining and related activities. Further beneficiaries are decision makers and researchers, who will get deeper insight into the data produced by the national statistical offices. The appropriate and timely statistics will be essential to informing governments, businesses and communities about the decisions that must be made to ensure that they maximize their use of natural resources.

III. Future activities

8. Upon endorsement by the Commission, the final handbook will be published on the Group's website.

9. According to Commission decision 48/116, and after the endorsement of the Handbook by the Commission, the Ulaanbaatar Group considers its work finished.

IV. Actions required by the Commission

10. The Statistical Commission is invited to:

(a) Endorse the Handbook;

(b) Thank the Ulaanbaatar Group for its work and dissolve the Ulaanbaatar Group.

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Items for discussion and decision: agricultural and rural statistics

Report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on recent developments in agricultural and rural statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2017/228 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on recent developments in agricultural and rural statistics. It includes: (a) a report of the Global Strategy Steering Committee on the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, which presents the key activities undertaken in 2017 and the plans for a second phase of implementation beyond 2018; (b) a summary of the work undertaken to date by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics, including the introduction of proposed guidelines for measuring food consumption and expenditures in household consumption and expenditure surveys; (c) a section on progress in the preparation of volume 2 of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020; and (d) a report on the FAO proposal for an international definition of small-scale food producers.

The Commission is invited to comment on the points for discussion raised in section VI of the report.

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I. Background

1. At the fortieth session of the Statistical Commission, in 2009, the Working Group on Agricultural Statistics, led by Eurostat and comprising the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United States Department of Agriculture, reported on the main issues in agricultural statistics and proposed a framework for a strategic plan to improve national and international agricultural and rural statistics (see E/CN.3/2009/3 and Corr.1).

2. The Commission welcomed the report, supported the proposed course of action and established the Friends of the Chair on Agricultural Statistics to design a strategic plan to improve agricultural and rural statistics (see E/2009/24, chap. I, sect. B, decision 40/102). In compliance with that decision, the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics was developed in 2009 and discussed at several international and regional meetings. At its forty-first session, in 2010, the Commission endorsed the technical content and strategic direction of the Global Strategy and urged FAO and the Friends of the Chair to expedite the development of the implementation plan aimed at strengthening the national agricultural statistical system (see E/2010/24, chap. I, sect. B, decision 41/102). The action plan to implement the Global Strategy, which defined a comprehensive technical assistance, training and research programme, and its governance arrangements were presented and endorsed at the forty-third session of the Commission in 2012 (see E/2012/24, chap. I, sect. B, decision 43/104).

3. At its forty-third session, the Commission endorsed the creation of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics as a new mechanism to develop and document good practices and guidelines on concepts, methods and statistical standards for food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group replaced the Friends of the Chair on Agricultural Statistics and the Wye Group on statistics on rural development and agriculture household income, with an expanded mandate to cover statistics on rural development. Additional tasks of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group are to facilitate the coordination and integration of statistics on food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development with other international statistical standards of related statistical domains, and to advise the Global Office of the Global Strategy on the research programme conducted in the framework of the Global Strategy.

4. Progress in the implementation of the Global Strategy was reported to the Commission in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2017. The last two reports also provided an account of the progress made by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on three lines of research: (a) methods for measuring and monitoring agricultural sustainability; (b) improving rural statistics; and (c) improving food consumption measurement (see E/CN.3/2015/16, sect. III and E/CN.3/2017/27, sect. III).

5. FAO is the lead United Nations agency in charge of developing and promoting the decennial World Programme for the Census of Agriculture around the globe. Every 10 years FAO reviews countries' census experiences and lessons learned and on that basis, prepares, publishes and disseminates revised and improved census guidelines. The work undertaken by FAO, in consultation with national and international experts, to develop new guidelines for the 2020 round of the census of agriculture, which will cover the period 2016–2025, was reported to the Commission in 2015 and 2017. In particular, volume 1 of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020 was published in 2015, while a draft of volume 2 was presented to the Commission in 2017.

6. Following the adoption by the Commission of the global indicator framework to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, FAO was identified as the custodian agency of 21 Sustainable Development Goal indicators. Intensive methodological work has since been carried out by FAO to upgrade the tier classification of the indicators under its custodianship and to develop the required international definitions.

II. Report of the Global Strategy Steering Committee on the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

A. Introduction

7. The present section provides an update on the progress made in the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics since the forty-eighth session of the Commission and the plans for a second phase of the programme beyond 2018. The report covers five topics: (a) overall progress in 2017; (b) governance, monitoring and evaluation; (c) development of cost-effective methods; (d) implementation of technical assistance and training; (e) priorities for 2018; and (f) plans for preparing a second action plan for the implementation of the Global Strategy.

B. Overall assessment of progress in 2017

8. Throughout 2017, significant efforts were made to achieve the objectives of the Global Strategy, both at global and regional levels. Furthermore, 2017 represented a pivotal year for the Global Strategy, with the finalization of core research topics, the accelerated delivery of technical assistance in target countries on a selected number of meaningful cost-effective methodologies and, finally, the decision of the Global Strategy Steering Committee to launch the preparation of a second phase of the Global Strategy.

9. The programme has improved its strategic planning approach and most of the recommendations that emerged from the mid-term evaluation (June–November 2015) were taken into consideration in planning the Global Strategy activities in 2017.

10. The Global Office made significant efforts to strengthen coordination with regional implementing partners in order to ensure greater uptake at country level of the methods, guidelines and training materials produced by the Global Office. At the same time, the delivery of cost-effective methodologies was accelerated and the documentation of six research topics was completed. By December 2017, the planned outputs for 36 research topics had been finalized, exceeding the target set by the Global Strategy logical framework. In total, 38 expert meetings had been organized, 41 research topics peer-reviewed and 28 topics field-tested since 2013. The results of the efforts made under the research component were disseminated through 25 technical reports, sets of guidelines and training materials in 2017, for a total of 70 products disseminated since 2013. In 2016, the Global Strategy Steering Committee decided to partially allocate the implementation of the newly developed accelerated technical assistance plan for Africa to the Global Office. The Global Office initiated direct provision of technical assistance on cost-effective methods to countries in Africa and has so far provided support to 14 countries. The Global Office also served

as secretariat of the task team responsible for making recommendations to the Steering Committee for the preparation of a second action plan for the Global Strategy.

11. In Africa, under the technical assistance component, the African Development Bank has provided support to 29 countries in developing strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics and to 49 countries for improving their national coordination mechanisms. In addition, the initial activities of the accelerated technical assistance plan were started in October 2017. An updated assessment of the agricultural statistics capacity indicator, which measures African countries' capacity to produce reliable agricultural statistics, was published in October 2017. Between 2013 and 2015, the capacity indicator increased by 6.4 per cent, signalling a significant improvement of the statistical capacity of countries in the region in a relatively short period of time. With regard to the training component, the Economic Commission for Africa has provided 33 of the 40 scholarships planned for the 2017/18 academic year, organized training for trainers of regional statistical training centres and produced syllabi for selected topics.

12. In Asia and the Pacific, the FAO Regional Office made major progress in providing support to countries in preparing their strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics: 13 countries received support in 2017. The Regional Office placed significant emphasis on providing direct technical assistance to countries on the cost-effective methodologies developed in the framework of the Global Strategy. The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific organized various training-of-trainers courses on agricultural statistics through the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific.

13. In the three regions that did not benefit from the Global Trust Fund of the Global Strategy, no significant progress was made in the mobilization of additional financial resources. Given the delayed start of the implementation of the Global Action Plan, the Global Strategy Steering Committee, in consultation with the donors, decided to extend the project for one year, until December 2018.

C. Governance, monitoring and evaluation and coordination

Governance

14. At the global level, the Global Strategy Steering Committee and the Global Executive Board held meetings in 2017. At its thirteenth meeting, held on 8 February 2017, the Steering Committee (a) approved the workplan of the Global Office for 2017; (b) allocated funds for all implementing partners; (c) endorsed a strengthened results framework; and (d) established a task team to prepare the second phase of the Global Strategy. At its fourteenth meeting, held on 12 October 2017, the Steering Committee agreed on the process for preparing the annual workplans for 2018, and endorsed the recommendations of the task team concerning the preparation of the second action plan. A further meeting of the Steering Committee was scheduled for December 2017 to endorse the allocation of funds for 2018. The Global Executive Board held its eighth meeting in February 2017 to endorse the 2017 workplans for Africa and Asia and the Pacific. The ninth meeting of the Global Executive Board was scheduled for December 2017 to endorse the 2018 workplans for Africa and Asia and the Pacific.

15. At the regional level, the Regional Steering Committee for Africa held its fifth meeting in Dakar in January 2017 and planned to hold its sixth meeting before the

end of 2017 to approve the 2018 regional workplan. The seventh meeting of the Regional Steering Committee for Asia and the Pacific was scheduled for mid-November 2017 in Bangkok, with a side meeting aimed at disseminating the cost-effective methodologies developed by the Global Office and sharing country experiences.

Coordination

16. Greater efforts have been put forth to enhance the coordination among participating partners and with other related initiatives. Meetings between implementing partners took place on a regular basis, and meetings with African partners and donors were organized every two months. The Global Office systematically attended all regional steering committee meetings.

Results framework

17. The results framework has been significantly improved in 2017 to reflect the decisions made by the Global Strategy Steering Committee to accelerate the delivery of technical assistance at country level and to implement the follow-up actions stemming from the 2015 mid-term evaluation. New activity indicators have been added, in particular for better measuring the technical assistance component. New tables have been included as annexes to the regular mid-year and annual financial reports.

Staffing

18. The Global Office has been fully staffed since the beginning of the programme in accordance with agreements made with the donors. The regional partners, however, have encountered difficulties in filling various planned positions. One partner (the African Development Bank) was not able to recruit staff for the planned project posts; other partners experienced delays in recruiting project staff (Economic Commission for Africa in 2015 and 2016; Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific in 2017). The positions of Coordinator of the Asia-Pacific regional office and Statistician have been vacant for over a year. The staffing issues have had and continue to have an impact on the delivery of activities.

Scientific Advisory Committee of the Global Strategy

19. The outputs of the research programme were discussed at the sixth meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee, held in Rome in February 2017. Eight lines of research were reviewed by the Committee: (a) methodology to include a supplementary woodfuel module in existing surveys and suggestions on data analysis; (b) statistics and indicators for the measurement of agriculture-environment interactions: a literature review and a proposal of key indicators for sustainable agriculture; (c) the measurement of productivity and efficiency in agriculture; (d) a methodological proposal and field test protocols for rural statistics; (e) a methodological proposal for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 2.4.1 on agricultural sustainability; (f) field test protocols for measuring decent work and youth employment in agriculture; (g) a technical report and guidelines on reconciling census and survey data; and (h) progress in the methodological development of the Agricultural Integrated Survey (AGRIS) and report from the expert meeting. The Committee welcomed the progress made on these eight lines of research and provided guidance and comments on the next steps. Furthermore, it recommended that all

Global Office outputs be readily available for implementation and that country-level adoption be tracked to monitor results.

D. Development of cost-effective methods

20. Since the beginning of the implementation of the Global Strategy in 2013, efforts have been made by the Global Office to carry out a comprehensive research programme and prepare guidelines and training material that could be used for supporting the provision of technical assistance to countries and regional statistical training institutions. By end of 2017, most of the research lines, including the development of the AGRIS toolkit, had been completed and more than 70 technical reports and sets of guidelines disseminated through the Global Strategy website (www.gsars.org). Over 9,000 pages of technical reports and guidelines, as well as 3,000 pages of training material and two e-learning courses, have been published in the resource centre of the Global Strategy website.

Research agenda

21. A detailed description of the progress made in 2017 under the different topics of the research agenda is provided below:

(a) Master sampling frame: experiments in Nepal were completed while pilots are being finalized in Rwanda and Brazil; a technical report illustrating the main findings will be issued in the first quarter of 2018; and specific guidelines dedicated to fisheries are expected to be published in the first half of 2018;

(b) Forestry: research on the collection of national forest products statistics was completed; the methodological work for incorporating a woodfuel module into existing surveys is still ongoing, with field tests being implemented in Ecuador and Lesotho; and guidelines are expected to be published in the first half of 2018;

(c) Post-harvest losses: field tests have been completed in Ghana, as well as a desk study in Malawi, and guidelines are to be issued in early 2018;

(d) Farm typology: research on this topic has progressed well and an expert meeting is being organized to complete the guidelines by mid-2018;

(e) Assessing user needs for decision making: the guidelines will be finalized in early 2018;

(f) Measuring decent work and youth employment: field tests for this research line were carried out in Kenya and guidelines are to be published by mid-2018;

(g) Indicators and collection methods on agri-environment: an expert group meeting was organized and guidelines will be published by mid-2018;

(h) Measuring agricultural productivity and efficiency: the literature review was published, an expert meeting was organized and guidelines are expected for mid-2018;

(i) Framework, methods for measuring and monitoring agricultural sustainability: the Global Office has closely collaborated with FAO in developing an internationally agreed methodology for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 2.4.1 and in testing its feasibility in five countries, through an analysis of available data. An online global consultation on the methodology of indicator 2.4.1 has also been initiated;

(j) Rural statistics: significant progress has been made on the definition of rural areas and on the identification of core rural indicators; the work on the first task is being undertaken in partnership with the Voluntary Commitment Group (Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, World Bank and OECD), with the objective of developing harmonized guidelines for the definition of rural and urban areas in 2018; and tests are being conducted in close collaboration with the Joint Research Centre;

(k) AGRIS: the methodological toolkit was finalized and disseminated, and the final test in Ghana of the integrated questionnaire will be completed by February 2018.

Guidelines and training material

22. From its inception, the Global Office has produced nearly 70 products on cost-effective methodologies for agricultural statistics. All products have been disseminated on the Global Strategy website (www.gsars.org). Particularly important are the following materials developed in 2017: a handbook on the use of remote sensing for agricultural statistics, guidelines on the use of administrative data, guidelines on livestock and livestock products, guidelines on food balance sheets, guidelines on gender, updated guidelines on strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics and the AGRIS toolkit. Moreover, a 10-day modular comprehensive training course on agricultural statistics was produced in 2017, while at the same time specialized training materials have been developed on cost of production, computer-assisted personal interviewing, nomadic livestock, master sampling frame, food balance sheets, fishery statistics, post-harvest losses and livestock products. In Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa has produced syllabi, curricula and 10 training materials which are being validated in regional expert group meetings. In Asia and the Pacific, the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific has produced 15 syllabi, curricula and training materials.

E. Implementation of technical assistance and training components

Technical assistance in Africa

23. In July 2017, the African Development Bank published the results of a second round of assessments of national agricultural statistical systems across the Africa region. The assessments highlight significant improvements in the capacities of countries to produce reliable and timely agricultural statistics. Moreover, all data collected in 2016 through the workshops on the minimum set of core data were published in 2017 under the Bank's Africa Information Highway. Support to the strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics process was ongoing in 2017, and by end of 2018, 29 countries in Africa are expected to have a strategic plan in place. In a joint effort of the African Development Bank and the Global Office, activities carried out under the accelerated technical assistance plan have yielded significant results: in 2017, 14 countries were assisted by the Global Office in the following areas: computer-assisted personal interviewing, cost of production, master sampling frame and AGRIS, food balance sheets, post-harvest losses and livestock and nomadic livestock.

Technical assistance in Asia and the Pacific

24. The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific has provided support to 13 target countries for the development of strategic plans for agricultural and rural

statistics. Significant support was delivered to 10 countries on the use of cost-effective methodologies for crop monitoring, livestock measurement, use of administrative data, computer-assisted personal interviewing, cost of production, master sampling frame and food balance sheets. Close synergies were pursued with other ongoing projects and regular programme activities of FAO to boost the impact of the Global Strategy at regional level; for example, the activities identified in strategic plans have been funded through complementary FAO projects in a few countries. A key output that addresses the specific needs of the Pacific subregion, the Pacific strategic action plan for agriculture and fisheries statistics, was jointly prepared by FAO and the Pacific Community, with the support of the Global Strategy.

Training in Africa

25. Since the beginning of the project, the Economic Commission for Africa has granted 72 scholarships and organized 23 workshops. Training on the use of cost-effective methods has also been provided to almost all African countries. In 2017, emphasis was placed on the preparation of syllabi and the provision of training for trainers, in close collaboration with the network of regional statistical training institutions.

Training in Asia and the Pacific

26. The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific has organized 20 national training workshops for 20 target countries since the beginning of the project. In 2017, six workshops were held on the following topics: computer-assisted personal interviewing, agricultural cost of production and food balance sheets.

F. Way forward and priorities for 2018

27. The activities planned by the Global Office for the final year of implementation of the programme will focus on: (a) finalizing the research work on priority topics, in particular those related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (b) producing the guidelines and training materials related to the lines of research completed in 2017 and those to be finalized in 2018; (c) completing the activities initiated in 2017 in the framework of the accelerated plan on technical assistance in Africa; (d) jointly organizing with the FAO Office of Evaluation the final evaluation of the first phase of the Global Strategy; (e) organizing the final conference for discussing the main achievements of the first phase and preparing the second phase; (f) serving as secretariat of the new Task Team in charge of drafting the second action plan for the Global Strategy; (g) organizing, as secretariat of the Global Strategy Steering Committee, a Steering Committee meeting in mid-2018 to review the ongoing implementation and take decisions regarding the necessary actions to guarantee that the final activities will be implemented smoothly by all partners; (h) organizing the preparation of the final narrative and financial consolidated reports for mid-2019; and (i) ensuring that all the material developed in the framework of the Global Strategy is made available through an appropriate repository.

28. In Africa, the activities planned for 2018 by the African Development Bank will focus on: (a) providing technical assistance to countries in the framework of the accelerated technical assistance plans endorsed by the Global Strategy Steering Committee; (b) supporting the design of strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics in countries that have started the process; (c) undertaking another country assessment cycle to measure the impact of the implementation of the Global Strategy

at country level; and (d) improving the dissemination of results achieved. The activities planned by the Economic Commission for Africa will focus on: (a) providing scholarships; (b) finalizing the syllabi on cost-effective methods; and (c) delivering training for trainers in collaboration with the network of regional statistical training institutions. The joint activities planned by the two partners will be the following: contributing to the final reporting on activities carried out in coordination with the Global Office; preparation of a final conference planned for end of 2018; the final evaluation; and the contributing to the work of the task team responsible for preparing the second action plan for the Global Strategy.

29. In Asia and the Pacific, the FAO Regional Office will focus in 2018 on: (a) providing support to countries in the framework of the accelerated technical assistance plans endorsed by the Global Strategy Steering Committee; (b) supporting the design of strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics in countries that have started the process; and (c) undertaking another country assessment cycle to measure the impact of the implementation of the Global Strategy at country level. The activities planned for the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific will focus on: (a) finalizing syllabi on cost-effective methods; and (b) providing training for trainers in collaboration with the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific. The joint activities planned by the two partners will mainly include contributing to the overall final reporting in coordination with the Global Office, preparing a final conference scheduled for the end of 2018, the final evaluation and contributing to the task team responsible for preparing the second action plan for the Global Strategy.

G. Preparation of a second action plan beyond 2018

30. At its thirteenth meeting, the Global Strategy Steering Committee endorsed the establishment of the task team to prepare the second phase of the Global Strategy and its proposed terms of reference, with the Global Office as secretariat. The task team reported back to the Steering Committee on 12 October 2017 with proposals and recommendations concerning the objectives, main outputs and implementation modalities of the second phase of implementation of the Global Strategy (2018–2022). The second phase is expected to focus on supporting countries' capacity to respond more effectively and sustainably to the data requirements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the area of agricultural and rural statistics.

31. The task team meetings, held on 13 September and 3 October 2017, were chaired by Johannes Jütting, Manager of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century. With the support of the secretariat, the task team analysed relevant documents and summarized the lessons learned from the implementation of phase one. The task team used the strength, weakness, opportunity and threat analysis to develop a matrix of possible strategic axes for the second phase. This was used as the basis to provide five recommendations to the Global Strategy Steering Committee.

32. The Steering Committee, at its fourteenth meeting, endorsed the following five recommendations:

(a) The preparation of an implementation plan for the second phase of the Global Strategy is recommended, with the following objectives: (i) strengthen countries' capacities using innovative approaches and boost data production through technical assistance and training in order to respond to the emerging data needs for the evolving national, regional and international development agendas, particularly related to the measurement and monitoring of Sustainable Development Goal

indicators; and (ii) increase the link between the production and use of agricultural statistics and national strategies for the development of statistics and strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics to avoid the creation of sectorial silos and modernize data and statistical production on the basis of the principles formulated in the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data;

(b) The second phase of the implementation plan should build on the strengths and results achieved during phase one, taking into account new opportunities, drawing lessons from the challenges faced and minimizing the possible threats. It should be focused on providing technical assistance and training in cost-effective methods to countries, using a modular approach and promoting innovative and efficient delivery modalities that reflect the latest advancements in capacity development. It should also take other existing initiatives into consideration in order to avoid duplications;

(c) A specific component of phase two should focus on advocacy and dissemination of cost-effective methodologies at country level as well as on sharing countries' experiences in their implementation;

(d) A simplification of the existing governance structures is recommended and innovative coordination and implementation mechanisms should be established to facilitate efficient delivery;

(e) A revised and innovative funding strategy, consistent with a flexible and modular implementation approach, should be adopted for phase two.

33. Finally, the Global Strategy Steering Committee approved the proposed modalities for the preparation of a second action plan for the Global Strategy:

(a) A new task team will be established to prepare the second phase, relying on and expanding the membership of the current task team, as needed. A drafting team will need to be established within the task team to prepare the second action plan in an inclusive manner. The secretariat is to prepare the terms of references, a workplan and a budget for the new task team, including for the drafting team, to be approved by the Global Strategy Steering Committee;

(b) The Global Office should include in its annual workplan for 2018 the budgetary provision to cover the activities in 2018 of the new task team.

III. Activities of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics

34. At the most recent meeting of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics, held in March 2017, three reports were discussed: (a) a report prepared by FAO on the definition of smallholders to monitor Sustainable Development Goal target 2.3; (b) a report by the Global Office on the progress of research on rural statistics; and (c) a report by the World Bank on the progress made in the elaboration of guidelines on food consumption measurement.

35. The guidelines for the collection of food consumption data were finalized by the World Bank and FAO in 2017. On the basis of a broad consensus, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group recommended that the document on food consumption measurement be submitted for endorsement at the forty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission. The guidelines are available as a background document.

Guidelines for the collection of food data in household consumption and expenditure surveys

36. Food is a key component of a number of fundamental welfare dimensions, such as food security, nutrition, health and prosperity. It makes up the largest share of household expenditure in low-income countries, accounting on average for about 50 per cent of the household budget, and thus constitutes a sizeable share of the economy. Proper measurement of food consumption is therefore central to the assessment and monitoring of various dimensions of well-being of any population, and hence of interest to multiple international, national and local agencies and to several development domains, including the social, economic and human domains.

37. Food consumption data are needed to monitor global targets, including key target indicators under the Sustainable Development Goals framework. The measurement of food consumption is crucial to assessing and guiding the pursuit of the FAO mandate to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition and the World Bank's twin goals of eliminating extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity. It is also important for national accounting measures of the overall size of the economy, such as gross domestic product. Finally, it is of interest to national and local governments, as well as non-governmental organizations, in guiding local and regional analysis and policy, as the mismeasurement of food consumption can lead to misallocation of funds and compromise the design, monitoring and evaluation of relevant policies and programmes.

38. Household consumption and expenditure surveys are the main instrument used to collect information on food consumption for these purposes. However, current practices for collecting consumption data differ widely across types of surveys, between countries and over time, compromising both the quality and comparability of the resulting data and measures. In the interest of improving food consumption measures, and to ensure that the data collected respond to the needs of a wide range of users, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group has led an effort to develop survey design guidelines based on a review of existing evidence and the commissioning of new, purposely designed research. The result of this effort is a set of recommendations for the design of food consumption modules in household consumption and expenditure surveys that are based on the contributions of a large community of experts, national statistical offices and international organizations.

39. The process that led to the current version of the guidelines document involved two expert consultations organized at FAO headquarters in 2014 and 2016, which included the participation of experts from different disciplines (economics, nutrition, food security, statistics) and institutional backgrounds (national statistical offices, international organizations, research institutes, academia). The analytical activities overseen by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group resulted in the preparation of a volume presenting new research from leading experts in the field, which was published in September 2017 in a special issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Food Policy*. The workplan for the preparation of the guidelines was first presented at a side event organized at the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission, in March 2015. In 2016, the management group of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys selected the harmonization of food consumption modules used in household surveys as one of the priority tasks for that group to work on, and mandated the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics to act as a task force for implementing a work programme to pursue that objective. A first draft of the guidelines was discussed by the members of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group

and presented at an open seminar during the forty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission in March 2017. The results of those discussions are reflected in the final version of the guidelines.

40. The work on the guidelines was led by the World Bank and FAO, with support from the Global Office of the Global Strategy for the Improvement of Agricultural and Rural Statistics. Countries that participated in an official capacity in the process included Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Mongolia, Morocco, Peru, Sweden, United States and the United States of America. Besides the members of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group, experts from the Asian Development Bank, the International Food Policy Research Institute, the Italian Institute of Statistics, the Bank of Italy, the Food and Nutrition Research Institute of the Philippines, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, as well as experts from universities and research institutes in Brazil, Greece, India, New Zealand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, all contributed to the development and review of the document.

41. The guidelines aim at assisting practitioners in improving survey design, while taking into account the cost of organizing a survey and the constraints statistical offices in low- and middle-income countries face. The domains covered by the recommendations in the guidelines include the most important survey design choices: the choice between a recall and a diary approach; the length of reference period; issues to do with capturing seasonality; number of survey visits; the collection of acquisition or consumption data; accounting for the number of members of the household participating in the meals consumed; accounting for food eaten away from home; principles for drawing the list of food items; and overcoming issues concerning the conversion of non-standard units of measurement.

42. The document presents an extensive discussion of the existing and emerging theoretical and empirical arguments in favour of or against each survey design choice. The discussion is based on a thorough review of the literature and on pilot studies conducted for the express purpose of contributing to the guidelines. The document also highlights areas where research is scant and more methodological work is needed to fully appreciate the impact of alternative survey designs. The overarching concern in drawing the recommendations has been to ensure the most appropriate balance between accuracy and cost-effectiveness, bearing in mind the typical constraints faced by low- and middle-income countries' statistical offices. In some cases, the recommendations might entail a costlier option than what is currently practiced, while in some cases their implementation might reduce the cost of data collection. The benefits should be assessed not only in terms of the accuracy and comparability of the data being collected, but also in terms of their usefulness and relevance of data for a wider user base (e.g., nutritionists and food security analysts, as well as statisticians and economists).

IV. World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020

43. Following the publication of volume 1 of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020, "Programme, concepts and definitions", in all official languages of the United Nations, round-table meetings were organized in 2016 and 2017 to present and disseminate the volume to FAO member countries in eight regions of the world: the Near East, Francophone Africa, Asia and Latin America in 2016, and Central and Eastern Europe, the Caribbean, Anglophone Africa and the Pacific in

2017. The participants were official statisticians and census leaders (from the ministry of agriculture and the national statistics office of each country) who will play a key role in the planning and execution of the next agricultural census in their countries.

44. Parallel to this work, FAO started the preparation of volume 2 of the World Programme, "Operational guidelines". Volume 2 is a revised and updated edition of the document entitled "Conducting agricultural censuses and surveys", published by FAO in 1996. It complements volume 1 by providing practical guidance to census practitioners on the main stages involved in the preparation and implementation of the census of agriculture following the new approaches introduced in volume 1.

45. Volume 2 also provides guidance for implementing the substantial innovations in census technology that have occurred over the last two decades. The availability of digital, mobile and more affordable tools for data capture, as well as for geo-positioning, remote sensing imaging, digital archiving and dissemination have provided new cost-effective alternatives to traditional methods of conducting the agricultural census. This technological revolution facilitates field operations and monitoring, shortens data processing, streamlines data archiving and preservation, increases the timeliness of the census data and ensures user-friendly access to and comprehensibility of the census results. The guidelines link to additional material of use to countries, such as publications and web-based resources that provide further illustration or additional details on addressing practical issues. Lessons learned from countries that have implemented new methodologies are shared through case studies of country practices.

46. Volume 2 has undergone an extensive consultation process. A technical review meeting was organized in January 2017 with the participation of global, regional and country experts to discuss the draft. Subsequently, Statistics Canada undertook a peer-review of the new draft between June and September 2017, which helped to improve the text. Thanks to that valuable contribution, a final draft of volume 2 was prepared and submitted to member countries and relevant international organizations in October 2017 for global consultation. A summary of the comments received will be submitted as a background document to the Commission.

47. Furthermore, FAO continues to assist member countries in strengthening their capacity to plan and implement the tenth round of the census of agriculture (2016–2025).

V. Proposal for an international definition of small-scale food producers

48. Following the adoption by the Statistical Commission of the global indicator framework to monitor the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, FAO was identified as the custodian agency of 21 indicators, with the responsibility of collecting, validating and harmonizing data to track progress and inform annual reports at subregional, regional and global levels.

49. Two of the indicators under FAO custodianship, indicators 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, are designed to monitor progress in doubling the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers.

50. Though not strictly necessary to monitor trends in the labour productivity and income of small-scale food producers at national level, an international agreed definition is necessary to produce internationally comparable data for Sustainable

Development Goal indicators 2.3.1 and 2.3.2. Such a definition is also needed to compare the structure of the agricultural sector across countries and identify specific policy measures to address the challenges faced by small-scale food producers around the world.

51. Reaching consensus on an international definition of "small-scale food producers" is rather challenging, since the agroecological and socioeconomic conditions of food producers vary greatly across countries, as do the definitions proposed in the literature and adopted for national policy purposes. It is important to highlight, however, that the international definition of small-scale food producers proposed by FAO is meant to ensure consistent global reporting on the Sustainable Development Goal indicators and not to replace national definitions that reflect national policy priorities. Therefore, if the definition is endorsed, countries will be requested to collect data that can be considered in terms of both the national and international definitions.

52. Before entering into a discussion of the criteria used for defining food producers, some clarifications concerning the target population are required. Only operators belonging to the broader agricultural sector are considered food producers (farmers, fishers, foresters, and pastoralists), while agro-industry operators are outside the scope. In addition, hobby leisure farmers (a growing phenomenon in many developed countries) are not comprised in the target population. These categories, however, are better excluded at national level because setting a unique threshold at international level risks also excluding subsistence farmers in developing countries, who instead should be included.

53. FAO proposes defining small-scale food producers using a combination of two criteria, namely the physical size of the producer's operation, as expressed by the amount of land and the number of head of livestock in production, and the economic size of the operation, as expressed by its revenues. The use of revenue as an additional criterion reduces the risk of classifying as small-scale food producers those who manage to generate relatively large revenues, even from a small resource base. These criteria are applied not in absolute but in relative terms, in order to accommodate national specificities. From the operational viewpoint, following this approach, small-scale food producers are identified by the intersection of three distinct groups.

54. The first group is those who operate an amount of land falling in the first two quintiles (the bottom 40 per cent) of the cumulative distribution of land size (measured in hectares) at national level.

55. The second group is those who operate a number of livestock falling in the first two quintiles of the cumulative distribution of the number of livestock per production unit at national level (measured in Tropical Livestock Units).

56. The third group is those who obtain an annual economic revenue from agricultural activities falling in the first two quintiles of the cumulative distribution of economic revenues from agricultural activities (measured in purchasing power parity dollars) at national level. This proposal is described in a technical note which has been submitted as background document to the current session of the Commission.

57. The definition was developed after an extensive literature review and the collection of national definitions. The proposed definition was then tested on a sample of 29 countries, using micro-data of 41 integrated agricultural surveys available to FAO and carrying out simulations on the impact of using different definitional criteria. The exercise is being extended to include some additional simulations for

European countries and the United States, carried out in collaboration with the national statistical institutions of those countries.

58. A wide consultation process, involving experts from international organizations and national statistical offices, was undertaken to review and finalize the proposed definition. The proposal, in particular, was validated by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics, which comprises representatives of United Nations agencies and official statisticians from Brazil, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Morocco, Peru, Samoa, Sweden, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States and Eurostat. Subsequently, in August 2017, FAO and the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, in coordination with the co-chairs of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, launched a global written consultation involving all United Nations member countries. The consultation was open for a total of six weeks and feedback was received from 58 national and regional institutions. Detailed results of the consultation and replies to the main comments provided are reported in the background document.

59. During the global consultation, some concerns were expressed regarding the choice of the threshold for the distributions of the definitional variables. In particular, some countries considered the threshold selected as arbitrary, requesting it to be either higher or lower. It should be noted, however, that all thresholds are somewhat arbitrary, and focusing on the bottom 40 per cent is common among programmes tackling inequalities (for example, the shared prosperity project of the World Bank).

60. Some suggestions were made to include additional criteria, such as the agroecological zone, the farming system or the degree of mechanization of the farm. These factors, however, are not always meaningful for all types of food producers. Moreover, it should be considered that the economic size criterion already captures these variables, at least partially, through their impact on the revenue of the food producer. The use of these variables, therefore, does not seem to increase significantly the precision of the definition, while it makes measurement much more difficult.

61. Some comments highlighted the difficulty of implementing the proposed definition, which requires complex data (in particular on the revenues of food producers) not readily available in all countries. This is certainly an important aspect which, however, needs to be addressed anyway, given that countries are required to collect the same type of information for monitoring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 2.3.2. The necessary source for assessing both indicators is an integrated agricultural and household survey, which is already conducted in a number of countries. FAO has recently developed AGRIS and the related toolkit to provide guidance to countries on how to upgrade their national agricultural survey for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals.

62. Although highlighting some reasonable concerns, none of the comments received has offered concrete and viable proposals for an alternative approach, nor did any significant consensus emerge around a way to amend the proposed definition. In order to address the concerns raised, FAO is reaching out to the few countries who have turned down the definition to find an agreement.

VI. Points for discussion

63. The Statistical Commission is invited to:

(a) Express its views on the progress and latest developments in the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics;

(b) Express its support for the preparation of a second action plan for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics;

(c) Comment and provide further guidance on work being carried out by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics;

(d) Endorse the proposed guidelines for the collection of food data in household consumption and expenditure surveys;

(e) Take note of the final draft of volume 2 of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020 and encourage member countries to use it as a reference for the implementation of the 2020 round of the census of agriculture;

(f) Urge member countries to conduct at least one census of agriculture in the period 2016–2025;

(g) Request countries, resource partners and other donors to mobilize resources for the implementation of the 2020 round of the census of agriculture;

(h) Review the proposed international definition of small-scale food producers to be considered for endorsement by the Commission.

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Climate change statistics

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2017/228 and past practice, the present report was prepared by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat in its capacity as secretariat of the Statistical Commission, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It contains an update on the work of the Statistics Division in the area of climate change statistics, in response to the mandate set out in Statistical Commission decision 47/112, adopted by the Commission at its forty-seventh session, in particular with regard to the development of a global set of climate change statistics and indicators. The report includes a list of activities prepared by the Division outlining the way forward. Complementarily, it describes progress made by ECE in its work on climate change-related statistics and indicators as well as the current work and future plans of the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on policy and statistics interface. In this regard, the report also explores ways to strengthen the relationship between these institutions and how to better engage the wider statistical community in this work. The Statistical Commission is invited to comment on the points for discussion under section VI of the report.

* E/CN.3/2018/1.

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I. Introduction

1. At its forty-seventh session, held from 8 to 11 March 2016, the Statistical Commission adopted decision 47/112 (see E/2016/24), in which it:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/2016/15), which summarized the work done on climate change statistics;

(b) Urged countries to develop and strengthen environment statistics, which are necessary for the effective monitoring of key aspects of climate change;

(c) Urged the international statistical community to expand its regional, subregional and national capacity-building efforts in climate change statistics, in line with the Paris Agreement, adopted by the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2015, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(d) Recommended that countries use the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics 2013 to guide the development of climate change statistics and indicators, given the close interrelationship between environment statistics and climate change statistics;

(e) Noted the link between climate change and disaster reduction and requested that the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 be considered in the development of climate change statistics and indicators;

(f) Encouraged national statistical systems to invest adequate resources in the development of climate change statistics, in particular the underlying environment, energy, agriculture and industry statistics, and environmental-economic accounts that relate to the climate-economy interface and the physical flow accounts for greenhouse gas emissions;

(g) Urged the donor community to mobilize additional resources to enable capacity-building in environment and climate change statistics in developing countries;

(h) Expressed its appreciation for the work being undertaken by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) task force on climate change-related statistics and indicators, in particular their efforts to develop a set of climate change-related statistics and indicators and requested the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat to review and consider it as a basis for developing a global set of climate change statistics and indicators, applicable to countries at various stages of development;

(i) Requested that climate change statistics appear on the multi-year programme of the Statistical Commission with greater frequency and asked the Statistics Division to develop a work plan for submission to the Statistical Commission at its forty-eighth session.

II. Background

2. A brief description of the main concerns emanating from climate change was presented in the above-mentioned report of the Secretary-General to the Commission in 2016 (E/CN.3/2016/15). The report: outlined the earlier work of the Commission during the period from 2008 to 2009 (sect. II); provided a detailed explanation of the demand for and supply of climate change statistics (sect. III); and described the work

of the Statistics Division as it relates to climate change statistics in terms of environment statistics (for example the link between climate change statistics and the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics), geospatial statistics (for example describing how geospatial information can contribute to the measurement and monitoring of climate change), and environmental-economic accounts (for example how the work of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounts is related to climate change statistics) (sect. IV).

3. The present report provides an overview of the work being carried out in the field of climate change statistics and indicators by the Statistics Division and ECE since 2016. Given the adoption of the Paris Agreement in December 2015, it was also considered important to invite the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to contribute to the report from a policy and information needs perspective. Several other international and regional organizations have been embarking on important work in climate change statistics, including: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in the creation of the FAOSTAT emissions database, and the new FAOSTAT domains on emissions intensities and temperature change; and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in its special issue of the Compendium of Environment Statistics in the Arab Region 2017, focusing on climate change-related statistics in the Arab region, which contains a proposed set of indicators. Given that there are many other institutions working in this field, and the growing need to share and coordinate such information, the Division is planning to develop an inventory of related work on climate change statistics being carried out by partner organizations.

III. Current work on climate change statistics in the Statistics Division

4. Based on the mandate set out in Commission decision 47/112 in which the Statistics Division was requested, inter alia, to review the ECE set of climate change-related statistics and indicators and to consider it as a basis for developing a global set of climate change statistics and indicators, the Division embarked on this work. The ECE set of climate change-related statistics and indicators was endorsed by the Conference of European Statisticians at its plenary session in June 2017 as an initial list. Given the fact that this remains an initial list and that further refinement is necessary (see sect. V below), the Division, which is also an active member of the ECE task force on a set of key climate change-related statistics and indicators, is: (a) pilot testing the ECE set of indicators with countries to assess its applicability for developing countries, in particular to consider areas of concern such as adaptation/vulnerability; and (b) discussing the set of indicators in various forums, including at the meetings of the Expert Group on Environment Statistics (https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envstats/fdes/fdes-eges.cshtml) and at regional and national capacity-building workshops. This work is currently being carried out in parallel with that of ECE, which should be seen as beneficial and complementary, given its complex nature. Furthermore, the refinement of the ECE set of indicators will provide important inputs for the development of the global set of climate change statistics and indicators being undertaken by the Division.

5. In order to make the link between statistics and policy, the Statistics Division has been collaborating with the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by providing inputs to its policy process through the open call for submissions under the work programme for the Paris Agreement and

through the call for submissions on indicators for adaptation and resilience. Such initiatives will continue to be carried out and additional areas of collaboration will be explored.

6. The Statistics Division pilot survey on climate change-related statistics and indicators is based on the ECE set of indicators and organized around the same areas (drivers of climate change, emissions, impacts, mitigation and adaptation). To date, comments from countries have revealed the following areas of concern: issues with data disaggregation; methodological issues; lack of technical capacity and human resources; financial and time constraints; lack of policy framework; lack of a dedicated inter-institutional working group focusing on climate change statistics; several indicators not being applicable, not available or too complex for developing countries; and the need to adjust indicators and to include new sub-areas or indicators pertinent to developing countries. The pilot survey is ongoing, but it has already demonstrated the need to develop, inter alia,: (a) new or additional indicators to reflect the situation in developing countries; (b) a process on how to identify/modify the indicators based on both existing global processes (for example, incorporating indicators identified in adaptation and mitigation plans being submitted to the secretariat of the Climate Change Convention) and regional and national policies, priorities and processes; and (c) guidance for a systematic process for a full consultation at the national level involving all stakeholders.

7. In order to advance this work and develop a global set of climate change statistics and indicators, the Statistics Division, in collaboration with other institutions, is working on the activities outlined below. It should be noted that all listed activities and other related activities will be developed into a workplan with the support of the Expert Group on Environment Statistics and presented to the Statistical Commission at a future session. The planning of activities will be fully aligned to various ongoing processes, including the refinement of the ECE set of climate change-related statistics and indicators, as well as the development of the data requirements for the implementation of the Paris Agreement, which are expected to be completed by December 2018:

(a) Analysis of the results of the ongoing pilot survey and the sharing of feedback with the secretariat of ECE as it continues to refine the ECE set of indicators;

(b) Review of the current ECE list of indicators with a view to their modification, based on the results of the pilot survey and inputs from the Expert Group on Environment Statistics, prior to a global consultation on climate change statistics and indicators planned for the biennium 2018–2019;

(c) Development of a comparison table between the climate change-related Sustainable Development Goal indicators and the Basic Set of Environment Statistics contained in the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics;

(d) Development of methodology sheets related to climate change statistics as part of the development of the Manual on the Basic Set of Environment Statistics and drawing upon chapter 5 of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics, which contains a cross-cutting analysis of climate change;

(e) Expansion of the mandate of the Expert Group on Environment Statistics to cover more aspects of climate change statistics and indicators, given the very close relationship of this work to environment statistics;

(f) Exploration of ways to strengthen the relationship between the climate data producers and data users, and engaging the wider statistical community;

(g) Collaboration with secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in support of its data-related needs, for example, in the plans of the Adaptation Committee to develop relevant indicators;

(h) Communication with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change with regard to the development of the global set of climate change statistics and indicators and to the refinement of its publication *2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories*;

(i) Undertaking pilot projects or case studies on climate change statistics in countries worldwide;

(j) Organizing side events on climate change statistics on the margins of the sessions of the Statistical Commission;

(k) Expansion of the dissemination of climate change statistics and indicators on the website of the Statistics Division;

(l) Development of an inventory of related work on climate change statistics by partner organizations.

IV. Climate-related data under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement

Communication of information

8. Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,[1] the countries that are parties to the Convention communicate a large amount of information related to the national implementation of the Convention. The specific requirements for the communication of such information differ between developed and developing countries, and for reporting under mitigation, adaptation and support. The main sources of information are:

(a) National communications (all parties);

(b) National greenhouse gas inventories (all parties, in differing formats);

(c) Biennial reports (developed countries) and biennial update reports (developing countries);

(d) National adaptation plans (developing countries);

(e) National adaptation programmes of action (the least developed countries only).

[1] The obligations relating to the communication of information relating to the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change are laid out in article 12 of the Convention, and the specific information requirements are detailed in many decisions by parties to the Convention on the nature, frequency and format of the information that needs to be communicated. For the countries that are parties to the Kyoto Protocol, the related communication obligations are contained in article 7 of the Protocol.

9. Following the adoption of the Paris Agreement, the submission of nationally determined contributions has become a new and essential communication channel for all parties to the Agreement. Under the Paris Agreement, a transparency framework for action and support was established, encompassing the submission and consideration of the information on the implementation of the Agreement, including information on mitigation, adaptation and support.

Available information and data

10. The information submitted by parties to the Convention contains a vast amount of data concerning all aspects of national activities to implement actions to address climate change, with the areas of mitigation of climate change, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change, related financial and technological support, and climate-related research and observation being covered most extensively. Practically all information communicated by parties is publicly available on the website of secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, including both the primary data (as submitted by parties) and secondary or processed information (the information/data compilations, reports or online databases) are presented. For example, the original national communications and submissions of data on greenhouse gas inventories are posted on the website (available at http://unfccc.int/national_reports/items/1408.php) whereas data on processed greenhouse gases are available in the form of an online database (available at http://unfccc.int/ghg_data/items/3800.php); data relating to the implementation of the market-based mechanisms under the Kyoto Protocol[2] are also available on the site (at http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/mechanisms/items/1673.php). For the Paris Agreement, nationally determined contributions are available on the website of the Climate Change Convention (see http://www4.unfccc.int/ndcregistry/Pages/Home.aspx). Information and data on the process to formulate and implement national adaption plans are also available on that site (see http://www4.unfccc.int/nap/Pages/Home.aspx).

Data-related needs

11. The amount of information to be communicated by parties is vast, and much of that information is complex, requiring both reliable data, from national statistics systems in particular, and a significant organizational and analytical effort for its preparation, with the related need for expertise and resources. The high quality of available national statistics is indispensable for the credibility of the information submitted, and the availability and sustainability of the national arrangements for the preparation of the information needed is equally critical.

12. Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, a number of training programmes have been established, especially for developing countries. Such programmes have been helping national experts in the preparation of the information needed,[3] or in becoming qualified experts for the review or analysis of

[2] The mechanisms established under the Kyoto Protocol are: the clean development mechanism; joint implementation; and emissions trading.

[3] See, for example, tools and training materials to facilitate reporting by developing countries, available at http://unfccc.int/national_reports/non-annex_i_natcom/training_material/methodological_documents/items/7914.php.

the information submitted,[4] as part of a comprehensive measurement, reporting and verification framework established under the Convention. However, support for such training is limited and does not substitute for having solid national data collection systems and the capability of interpreting/processing the data. This situation applies in particular to data for the energy sector, which is usually the primary source of greenhouse gas emissions,[5] but it is relevant to other economic sectors as well (including in the agriculture and forestry sectors). The underlying strength of national statistical systems is a key factor in determining the amount and quality of the information required under the Climate Change Convention. Also important is the understanding of the relationship between national statistics and climate-related data. In this regard, recent work of the Statistics Division[6] and ECE[7] is particularly valuable, and should not only be maintained but also strengthened, including work regarding the relationship between climate-related data and the Sustainable Development Goals. The secretariat United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has contributed to that work and, given the importance of promoting timely and reliable climate change statistics, remains very supportive of these efforts.

13. The implementation of the Paris Agreement will increase the need for climate-related data. Although the exact data requirements for the implementation of the Agreement are not yet fully defined, the related negotiations,[8] which are ongoing, to be completed in December 2018, it is certain that, in order to implement the transparency framework for action and support (article 13 of the Paris Agreement) or the global stocktake (article 14), countries will need more data and, at least in part, new data compared to what currently exists under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. With regard to existing data, changes in terms of scope, coverage and frequency may be required.

14. The emphasis on strengthening mitigation action (articles 4, 5 and 6 of the Paris Agreement), adaptation efforts (articles 7 and 8) and financial/technological support for climate-related action by countries (articles 9 and 10) will have implications for upcoming additional data needs. For example, in order to prepare and implement nationally determined contributions, countries will require specific data, for example data relating to the ability to project emissions or to the costing of new/alternative options for energy supply and use. Such data needs are required to support global action on climate change, and broad support for all related processes is therefore required, including support from the United Nations system, in order to ensure that action on climate change can be based on solid science and reliable, up-to-date information. This information will also support the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular in view of the need to enhance efficiency in the use of data, avoid unnecessary reporting burdens and reduce duplications in reporting.

[4] See, for example, training programmes for the review of information submitted by developed countries (Annex I parties) at http://unfccc.int/national_reports/expert_training/training_programmes_for_experts/items/2763.php.

[5] For the energy sector, the so-called "activity data", such as physical flows of various energy sources, and the related emission factors are specifically required.

[6] See, for example, E/CN.3/2016/15.

[7] Such as the ECE publication *Recommendations on Climate Change-Related Statistics*, available along with other relevant information, at http://www.unece.org/publications/ces/climatechange.html.

[8] See, for example, the related information on the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement, available at http://unfccc.int/bodies/apa/body/9399.php.

V. Current work in the areas of climate change-related statistics and measuring extreme events and disasters in the Economic Commission for Europe

Work on climate change-related statistics in the Economic Commission for Europe region

15. In 2017, at its the forty-eighth session, the Statistical Commission discussed the recent outcomes of methodological work undertaken in the ECE region, and noted the potential global applicability and usefulness of the standards and guidelines developed by the Conference of European Statisticians, including in its publication on climate change-related statistics.[9] The Statistical Commission expressed its appreciation for the work undertaken in the ECE region, especially on emerging topics in statistics, such as on the measurement of extreme events and disasters. The section below will describe developments in the ECE region since the previous report to the Statistical Commission in 2017 (E/CN.3/2017/6).

16. ECE, which is currently focusing on the implementation of the recommendations made in the above-mentioned report[10] organizes a regular expert forum for producers and users of climate change-related statistics (together with an ECE steering group chaired by Norway). The most recent meeting, hosted by FAO, took place from 3 to 5 October 2017 in Rome. The work is carried out in close collaboration with the Directorate General for Climate Action of the European Commission, the European Environment Agency, Eurostat, FAO, the International Energy Agency, the Statistics Division and the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. At the national level, this calls for active collaboration, involving national statistical offices, environment agencies, greenhouse gas inventory compilers and national focal points for both the Climate Change Convention and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The results of this work,[11] which may be of interest globally, include:

(a) In June 2017, the Conference of European Statisticians approved the final report of the task force on a set of key climate change-related statistics using the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and other statistical frameworks,[11] which proposes indicators on drivers of climate change, emissions, impacts, mitigation and adaptation, and is aligned with Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Conference extended the mandate of the task force to refine the initial set of indicators;

(b) The ECE steering group finalized a template for the drafting of national road maps to develop official statistics for climate change analysis. A number of countries are preparing their national action plans based on the template;

(c) ECE carried out a survey on countries' progress and challenges in developing climate change-related statistics to provide a basis for further capacity-building activities; (d) The analysis of current capacity gaps showed that statistical offices need further guidance on the data required for the compilation of greenhouse

[9] *Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations on Climate Change-related Statistics* (see www.unece.org/stats/publications/ces_climatechange.html).

[10] See also www.unece.org/stats/climate.html.

[11] See https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2016/mtg.19-Report_on_climate_indicators_final.pdf.

gas emission inventories, a guidance note on what national statistical offices need to know about inventories is being finalized.

(d) ECE has set up a wiki platform[7] on good practices on climate change-related statistics.

17. Work continues on the refinement of the initial set of key climate change-related indicators. Seventeen countries (including countries from outside the ECE region) are currently pilot testing the set of indicators in the compilation of data to determine the feasibility of the indicators and the available data sources, as well as in the identification of methodologies used at the national level for their compilation. Countries are also providing information on the main challenges faced in producing each indicator and suggestions for refining the methodologies. A background document prepared by ECE provides more detail on the outcomes of the pilot testing of the initial set of key climate change-related indicators in a number of countries.

18. The ECE task force (led by Italy) will develop the indicators based on experience gained from the pilot-testing exercise and will also identify methodologies and data sources and develop guidance for the compilation of the indicators. The task force will also develop a set of operational and contextual indicators to accompany the refined core set of key indicators. As indicated earlier, the work of the task force will contribute significantly to the development of the global set of climate change statistics and indicators that is currently being carried out by the Statistics Division.

Work on measuring extreme events and disasters in the ECE region

19. One issue related to climate change is the measurement of extreme events and disasters. In February 2015, the Conference of European Statisticians launched an investigation to clarify how official statistics can contribute to the work related to extreme events and disasters. Official statistics provide vast amounts of relevant data, including data on population, transport and infrastructure, that could contribute to disaster management and risk reduction, but that are not yet being used to their full potential.

20. An ECE task force, chaired by Italy, has been clarifying the role of official statistics in providing data for disaster management and risk reduction and in identifying practical steps on how national statistical offices, in coordination with national agencies responsible for disaster management, can support work in this area. The task force is planning to finalize its work by the end of 2018.

Convergence among global efforts to strengthen disaster-related statistics

21. ECE continues its close cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, as well as with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). ECE is contributing to the work of the ESCAP Expert Group to develop a disaster-related statistics framework by March 2018.

[7] https://statswiki.unece.org/display/CCS.

22. ECE, ESCAP and UNISDR, together with the Group on Earth Observations, have jointly initiated eight case studies on Armenia, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates[14] on the role of national statistical offices and the use of official statistics in disaster-risk management. At the meeting of the ECE Expert Forum on climate change-related statistics in October 2017, Armenia, Italy, Mexico and Turkey shared their best practices in this area.[15]

23. ECE is also contributing to the technical work being carried out by UNISDR to operationalize the monitoring of the Sendai Framework for Disaster-risk Reduction and the Sustainable Development Goals, including technical guidance material for the testing and roll-out of the Sendai Framework indicators. This work is based on the General Assembly resolution 71/276, in which the Assembly endorsed the recommendations of the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on indicators and terminology relating to disaster risk reduction.

24. Responding to the recommendations of the intergovernmental expert working group, and following discussions at the United Nations World Data Forum 2017 (Cape Town, South Africa, January 2017), it was proposed to establish a global partnership on disaster-related statistics. ECE, ESCAP and UNISDR are in the process of setting up this partnership, with UNISDR acting as the secretariat.

VI. Points for discussion

25. **The Statistical Commission is invited to:**

(a) **Express its support for the work of the Statistics Division in the development of a global set of climate change statistics and indicators, building upon all other processes in an effective and appropriate manner;**

(b) **Review the list of activities presented by the Statistics Division for the development of the global set of climate change statistics and indicators that will be included in the workplan to be presented to the Statistical Commission at a future session;**

(c) **Approve the expansion of the mandate of the Expert Group on Environment Statistics to cover more aspects of climate change statistics and indicators and to contribute to the development of the above-mentioned workplan;**

(d) **Encourage Member States to participate in the pilot surveys on climate change-related statistics and indicators being undertaken by the Statistics Division, as well as in the planned global consultation on climate statistics and indicators;**

(e) **Comment on how the international statistical community can be more engaged with the secretariat of the United Nations Framework on Climate Change in order to assist in meeting information needs and to contribute to the statistical capacity-building efforts currently being undertaken by the secretariat;**

(f) **Express its support for the work being undertaken by the ECE Task Force on the core set of climate change-related indicators, encourage countries to pilot test the initial set of key indicators developed by the ECE Task Force and to prepare national road maps for the development of climate change-related statistics.**

[14] All presentations are available on http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47914.

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Items for discussion and decision: statistical classifications

Report of the Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2017/228 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications. In the report, the Expert Group provides updated information on work related to the development and implementation of international statistical classifications in various fields. It also describes its work on the coordination of classifications work and the international family of statistical classifications.

The Commission is invited to comment on the issues described in the present report and to endorse the revised Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP 2018) for use as an international standard.

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Report of the Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications

I. Introduction

1. The Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications was charged by the Statistical Commission at its thirtieth session, held from 1 to 5 March 1999, with improving cooperation on international classifications and ensuring harmonization and convergence among classifications in the international family of economic and social classifications (E/1999/24, chap. VII).

2. The international family of economic and social classifications comprises the classifications that play the role of standard classifications in individual or multiple statistical domains and that have been reviewed and approved as guidelines by the Statistical Commission or another competent intergovernmental body on such matters as economics, demographics, labour, health, education, social welfare, geography, the environment and tourism.

3. The present report provides an overview of the main activities in the area of international statistical classifications carried out since the forty-seventh session of the Statistical Commission, held in 2016.

II. Activities of the Expert Group since 2016

4. The Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications met in New York from 6 to 8 September 2017 to discuss a wide range of topics, including work within the international family of economic and social classifications such as an approval process for the international classifications, the criteria to be used in deciding membership in, and the quality of, classifications in the family, and improved options for website dissemination, accessibility and maintenance. In addition, there were broader considerations of emerging areas for official statistics such as gender identity and disaster risk reduction, and better communication with classification users and national and regional efforts to further progress on the implementation of revised classifications and the effective management of classifications.

5. The visibility of the Expert Group before the Statistical Commission and the international community was discussed. In particular, the role of the Expert Group was considered in relation to the initiation, development, approval and implementation of international statistical classifications. The development and endorsement by the Expert Group of an approval process for supporting this type of work and enabling better implementation of best practice approaches, stem from the endorsement by the Statistical Commission of the role of the Expert Group as the central coordination body for current and future work on all statistical classifications that are the responsibility of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat. Initiation of any international classification development by any international agency is first to be coordinated with the Expert Group.[1]

6. The Expert Group reviewed the proposed composition of the international family of economic and social classifications, the details of which will be available on the updated Statistics Division website. In addition, the Expert Group considered making information on its existing best practices and criteria documentation more

[1] See E/2016/24, decision 47/108 (b) and (c).

user friendly on its website in order to support regional and national statistical agencies.

7. The Expert Group received reports from the technical subgroups working on specific issues under the guidance of the Expert Group itself, namely:

- Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP)
- International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) Rev. 4
- Central Product Classification (CPC) Ver. 2.1

8. In addition, the Expert Group continued to collaborate with and support the work done by international agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

9. The work of the Expert Group was administered by the Bureau, which met on a regular basis to ensure that the Group functioned consistently throughout the period, that individual work elements were carried out and that guidance and communication were facilitated for the Group on matters pertaining to international statistical classifications. The composition of the Expert Group and the Bureau can be found in the annex to the present report.

III. Work of the technical subgroups

A. Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose

10. The Expert Group received a report from the Technical Subgroup on the Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose on the work done in reviewing and finalizing the new COICOP 2018.

11. The outcomes of the full review, including details on the global consultation with national statistical agencies, the collaboration with the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts and the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics, and issues resolved were presented to the Expert Group along with some additional issues for final resolution.

12. The Expert Group provided advice on the issues presented and, in principle, endorsed the revised classification pending the additional changes and editorial issues that needed addressing. The Technical Subgroup was congratulated on its work; and its next step will be to investigate the usage and the impact of the COICOP changes on the other functional classifications within the System of National Accounts (SNA) to determine whether those classifications required review.

13. The complete draft of COICOP 2018 was made available to the Commission as a background document. The introductory part of the document includes a detailed summary of the conceptual and structural changes in the new classification.

14. The Statistical Commission is invited to adopt the revised COICOP (COICOP 2018) for use as an international statistical classification.

B. International Standard Industrial Classification, Rev. 4

15. The Expert Group received a report from the Technical Subgroup on the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), in which the Technical Subgroup outlined the progress on the treatment of factoryless goods producers, including the development of a typology and the establishment of a methodology for identifying factoryless goods producers. In addition, the Expert Group was asked to consider the treatment of intermediaries and whether this would be reason to initiate a review of ISIC. As an outcome of this discussion, a set of guidelines on how to treat intermediaries was adopted.

16. The work of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Economic Commission for Europe task force on reviewing the statistical units model was presented to the Expert Group as those outcomes that could have a significant impact with regard to ISIC. Further discussion around the need for alternate aggregations, such as those for the blue economy, were discussed with a view to developing rules for when these could be created and approved.

17. It was agreed that there was no need to review ISIC Rev. 4 in the immediate future and that the Technical Subgroup would assess the issues on its work on factoryless good producers and the work on the statistical units model and make a recommendation at the next meeting of the Expert Group on whether ISIC needed to be reviewed.

C. Central Product Classification, Ver. 2.1

18. The Expert Group received a report from the Statistics Division on matters affecting the Central Product Classification (CPC). It was noted that the resolution of the issues pertaining to ISIC, and the impending revisions of the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) to HS 2022 and the Standard International Energy Product Classification meant that a decision to review CPC was not possible at this point.

19. The Technical Subgroup on Central Product Classification was also asked to ensure that the HS 2017-CPC correspondence was completed and that any other issues would be investigated, and to report back to the Expert Group with any recommendations.

IV. Other work on international classifications

20. The Expert Group continued to liaise and collaborate with custodians who are reviewing their statistical classifications, by providing advice on best practices; reviewing the concepts and principles of existing and emerging international classifications; facilitating the harmonization of related classifications; reviewing classifications against the criteria for inclusion in the international family; and facilitating or undertaking classification reviews when appropriate.

A. Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System

21. The Expert Group was advised on the development and amendments that had been released in the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System for 2017 and on the progress on HS 2022 development work. The Expert Group again raised the issue as to how national statistical offices could influence the System

development process since changes to the System were primarily advised by national customs agencies.

22. It was agreed that the World Customs Organization secretariat and the Expert Group would continue to work more collaboratively and establish an ongoing formal relationship between them.

B. International Classification of Status in Employment

23. The Expert Group was informed on the progress made by ILO on the recommendations from the nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, along with an overview of the work undertaken in preparation for the 2018 tripartite meeting of experts. A number of new standards for new concepts were proposed to replace the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) 93 to support the new measures for employment and work. New and innovative classification options were presented to the Expert Group for consideration. The Expert Group agreed to continue to support ILO and be more fully involved in the working group revising ICSE.[7]

C. International Standard Classification of Occupations

24. The key issue for the Expert Group at its previous meeting, held in 2015, was the consideration of the need for a revision to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) particularly with changes in skill levels and other structural issues that the classification was now presenting. A recommendation was sent to ILO proposing the creation of a working group to support ILO in determining an approach for the future revision of ISCO. It was noted, however, that since the previous meeting of the Expert Group, and the presentation of the known issues regarding ISCO, a wider range of issues now faced the viability of the classification. The Expert Group recommended that the twentieth International Conference of Labour Statisticians endorse a full revision of ISCO so that a revised ISCO could be considered at the International Conference of Labour Statisticians to be held in 2023, in order to enable implementation prior to the global round of censuses in 2025.

D. Other classification initiatives involving the Expert Group

25. The Expert Group discussed emerging initiatives in global and regional statistical classifications and the work undertaken on metadata standards and associated classification management systems.

26. Key areas presented and discussed related to the following issues:

- Work of the Institute for Statistics of UNESCO on a cultural satellite account
- Implementation by the United Nations Office on Crime and Drugs of the International Classification for Crime Statistics (ICCS)
- Work of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) on regionalization and the adoption of international classifications in the Pacific

[7] A detailed description of the International Classification of Status in Employment revision process and conceptual issues under discussion can be found in the report of the International Labour Organization on recent developments in work and employment statistics (E/CN.3/2018/18).

- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean Working Group on International Classifications
- Work of the Economic and Statistical Observatory of Sub-Saharan Africa (Afristat) on regionalization and adoption of international classifications in African countries
- Development of a statistical standard and classification for gender identity, sexual orientation and sexual identity in Australia, Canada and New Zealand
- Classifications within the System of Economic and Environmental Accounting (SEEA)
- Generic Statistical Information Model (GSIM) and Metadata Standards for Statistical Classification, including Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX)
- Swiss Federal Statistical Office coding tool
- Disaster risk reduction statistics

V. Future work and organization of the Expert Group

27. The Expert Group reviewed the progress made and working arrangements since the 2015 meeting of the Expert Group. The Expert Group has been able to function more consistently throughout the period owing to improved communication with the Bureau of the Statistical Commission and greater involvement in a wider array of international statistical classification matters.

28. The minutes of the Bureau meetings and action item lists are circulated to the Expert Group in order to provide transparency in the process and keep the Group informed of progress in the many areas of work in which it is involved.

29. The development of alternative mechanisms for discussion and the dissemination of classification matters will be explained with a view to replacing the current discussion format and better promoting the outcomes of classification determinations. The classifications best practices and criteria documentation will be set out in a more user-friendly format to be supplied to regional and national statistical organizations.

30. The Expert Group will continue to expand its areas of involvement to wider statistical classification matters such as environmental classifications, disaster risk reduction statistics, integration of statistical and geospatial classifications, big data impacts and other new areas of official statistics. In addition, the Group will explore the utilization of the Sustainable Development Goals as a mechanism for promoting the role and work of the Expert Group.

VI. Points for discussion

31. The Commission is invited:

(a) To endorse the revised Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP 2018) for use as an international standard;

(b) To comment on the work carried out by the Expert Group.

Annex

Members of the Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications

Countries

Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Costa Rica, France, Ghana, India, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Oman, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland and United States of America

Organizations

Economic and Statistical Observatory of Sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT), Eurostat, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Labour Organization, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the World Customs Organization

Bureau

- Andrew Hancock (New Zealand), Chair
- Alice Born (Canada)
- Ana Franco (Eurostat)
- Eva Castillo (Mexico)
- Severa de Costo (Philippines)
- Ralf Becker (Statistics Division), ex officio

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Report of the Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2017/228 and past practice, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics on progress in its work. Following decision 47/111, adopted by the Statistical Commission in March 2016, the Expert Group was established with the mandate to develop international recommendations on refugee statistics and a technical report outlining the way forward in development of comparable international standards for internally displaced persons statistics. The two documents address the need for international standards and improved comparability and quality of data on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons, and are aimed at increasing capacity at all levels and addressing the common challenges in measuring the numbers and characteristics of both groups by providing standardized measures and indicators, as well as recommendations on integrating statistical systems. The Commission is invited to discuss and adopt the international recommendations and the technical report on internally displaced persons statistics. The Commission is also invited to discuss and reaffirm the future work of the Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics, as suggested in paragraph 58.

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Report of the Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics

I. Introduction

1. At the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission, held in March 2015, Statistics Norway and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) presented a joint report on statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons (E/CN.3/2015/9). The report highlighted several challenges associated with the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons, including the lack of consistent terminology, the need for adequate data sources and difficulties in comparing international statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons.

2. The authors of the report suggested that an international conference be organized to bring together international organizations and experts from national statistical offices, with the aim of stimulating discussions on the existing challenges, identifying priorities and potential solutions to address these challenges and exploring how best to incorporate statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons into national statistical systems. They also expressed the need to work on international recommendations on refugee statistics, following an approach similar to that used in the publication *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*, and a complementary manual with practical guidance for the collection, analysis and dissemination of data on those populations. In its decision 46/104, the Statistical Commission supported the proposal to organize an international conference and acknowledged the need for international recommendations and a related handbook with practical guidance.

3. In follow-up to Commission decision 46/104, the Turkish Statistical Institute, Statistics Norway, UNHCR, the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat) and the Statistical Office of the European Free Trade Association organized the International Conference on Refugee Statistics, held in Antalya, Turkey, in October 2015. While recognizing the importance of improving statistics on internally displaced persons, participants at the conference focused on statistics on refugees and asylum seekers. During the conference, it was agreed that refugee statistics should form an integral part of national statistics and that there was a need to better understand stocks and flows of refugees and asylum seekers. It was also acknowledged that building more efficient information systems, serving both administrative and official statistics needs, and improving comparability between national and international figures, constituted major issues to be addressed.[1]

4. At the forty-seventh session of the Commission, in March 2016, the outcomes of the conference and the way forward to address the common challenges in refugee statistics, which were identified and agreed upon during the conference, were presented in a report by Statistics Norway, Turkstat, Eurostat and UNHCR (E/CN.3/2016/14). The suggestions made by the authors of the report included the establishment of a committee of experts on refugee statistics and the development of international recommendations on refugee statistics and a related compilers manual.

5. The Commission, in its decision 47/111, agreed to establish an expert group on refugee statistics, acknowledging the need to develop standards and improved

[1] The full report of the conference can be found at http://www.cbs.nl/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/UNSO%Conference%20Report%20Antalya%20%28final%29.pdf.

systems on refugee statistics, and at the same time suggested that the expert group include internally displaced persons in its scope of work. It was decided that the overall mandate of the Expert Group was to be focused on developing international recommendations and guidance on refugee statistics and to advance discussions on standards for statistics on internally displaced persons.

6. Based on the decision of the Commission, a steering committee, consisting of Statistics Norway, Eurostat and UNHCR, was established to develop the terms of reference for the work of the Expert Group, which were approved by the Bureau of the Statistical Commission in July 2016.[1] Membership in the Expert Group is open to all national statistical offices and international organizations. In its current form, the Expert Group consists of the Steering Committee, statistical authorities from more than 35 countries and territories,[2] and almost 20 regional and international organizations.[3]

7. Under decision 47/111, the Expert Group was mandated to develop the following deliverables:

(a) A set of international recommendations on refugee statistics, which can be used as a reference guide for national and international work concerning statistics on refugees and asylum seekers (submitted to the Commission at its forty-ninth session);

(b) A refugee statistics compilers manual, with operational instructions on how to collect statistics on refugees and asylum seekers (to be submitted to the Commission at its fiftieth session);

(c) A technical report outlining a way forward for the development of comparable international standards for statistics on internally displaced persons (submitted to the Commission at its forty-ninth session).

8. The Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics has had two meetings. During the first meeting in Copenhagen, in November 2016, the proposed structure of the international recommendations on refugee statistics and the technical report on internally displaced persons statistics were reviewed and groups were established to draft the various chapters of the recommendations. A separate

[1] The terms of reference can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/7116161/7772488/Terms-of-reference-refugee-statistics.pdf.

[2] Countries and territories include: Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Kurdistan region of Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo (all references to Kosovo in this paper should be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)), Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, the Niger, Norway, Pakistan, Palestine, the Philippines, Somalia, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ukraine and the United States of America.

[3] International organizations include: the European Commission (Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs and Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion), the European Asylum Support Office, Statistical Office of the European Free Trade Association, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Joint Internally Displaced Person Profiling Service, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Household International Migration Surveys in the Mediterranean Countries: Euro-Mediterranean statistical cooperation project, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat, the World Bank, and the World Food Programme (WFP).

subgroup was established to work on the technical report outlining the way forward in development of comparable international standards for internally displaced persons statistics. The Joint Internally Displaced Person Profiling Service[1] was asked by the Steering Committee to lead the work of the subgroup, with the support of Statistics Norway and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre as co-leaders. During the second meeting in Oslo, in April 2017, the substance and structure of the various chapters of the documents were discussed in greater detail, including the concrete recommendations to be included in the set of international recommendations. At a third meeting, held in Geneva in August 2017, involving only the members of the subgroup working on internally displaced persons statistics, a set of recommendations was developed for inclusion in the technical report.

9. The Expert Group has now finalized and submitted both the set of international recommendations and the technical report on internally displaced persons statistics to the Statistical Commission for consideration and approval at its forty-ninth session. After the consideration of those documents, the Expert Group will continue its work on refugee and internally displaced persons statistics, focusing on the development of the refugee statistics compilers manual, and refining its recommendations on internally displaced persons statistics. The Steering Committee has agreed that it would be beneficial to extend the mandate of the Expert Group so that it could also develop a compilers manual on internally displaced persons statistics. This would be of added value for the statistical community and would also address the clear need for more action and improved, evidence-based programmes addressing the needs of the growing population of internally displaced persons, using the momentum created by the work of the Expert Group. Both compilers manuals will contain more concrete operational instructions on the implementation of the proposed recommendations and both will be submitted to the Statistical Commission at its fiftieth session in March 2019.

II. Background

10. With the growing prominence of the issue of forced displacement internationally, there is an increasing interest at the national and international levels in statistics on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons, including complete, accurate, timely and internationally comparable estimates of the numbers of forcibly displaced persons. Estimates of the movements of conflict-induced populations are increasingly relevant for official population statistics, which need to include statistics on forcibly displaced populations in a consistent manner. Incomplete or inadequate statistics on these populations undermine the calculations with regard to the composition of such populations and their movements (migratory and others), which, in turn, affects other statistics, particularly those that are population based.

11. Robust statistics on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons are also critical for informed decision-making, which ultimately impacts the lives of vulnerable populations. There is a range of potential users of statistics on these populations, including local and national authorities and international organizations. Data on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons are required in order to improve our understanding of the phenomenon of forced displacement,

[1] The Joint Internally Displaced Person Profiling Service is an inter-agency service, established in 2009, which is concerned with profiling in internal displacement situations. The focus of its work is to provide support to a variety of actors in implementing profiling exercises, including field support, capacity-building and the provision of tools and guidelines (http://www.jips.org/en/home).

analyse its impacts, measure changes over time and provide an adequate response. Quality statistics also provide the requisite evidence to support: (a) better policy formulation and sound decision-making to address the challenges of forced displacement; (b) more effective monitoring, evaluation and accountability of policies and programmes; and (c) enhanced public debate and advocacy.

12. However, existing principles and recommendations on vital statistics, population and housing censuses and international migration statistics only address forced displacement peripherally. The need to enhance the comparability of international migration statistics (including statistics on asylum seekers and refugees) was first addressed in 1953, when the United Nations published *International Migration Statistics*.[4] In 1976, the Statistical Commission published *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*,[5] to encourage countries to collect, tabulate and disseminate statistics on migrants and to enhance international comparability. In 1998, those recommendations were revised and expanded to include specific guidelines for the compilation of statistical information on asylum seekers. The revised recommendations do not, however, address large movements of refugees or internally displaced persons.[6] Furthermore, many refugees are not international migrants and refugees and internally displaced persons have specific protection needs which warrant dedicated statistics.

13. It therefore became necessary to develop a set of specific recommendations that countries and international organizations could use to improve the collection, compilation, disaggregation, reporting and overall quality of statistics on forcibly displaced populations. The objective of these recommendations is "to improve statistics on an important aspect of international migration and to improve common information about a situation with a significant impact on global welfare".[7]

14. In the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/1, Heads of State and Government recognized the importance of improved data collection, particularly by national authorities; called for enhanced international cooperation to improve data collection on refugees and migrants, including capacity-building for national authorities; noted that such data should be disaggregated by sex and age and include information on regular and irregular flows, the economic impacts of migration and refugee movements, human trafficking, the needs of refugees, migrants and host communities and other issues; and stated that data collection would be consistent with national legislation on data protection and international privacy obligations, as applicable.

15. A number of resolutions adopted by United Nations bodies have also emphasized the importance of reliable data on internally displaced persons in order to improve policy, programming and response for these populations, ensure the protection of their human rights and support durable solutions to displacement. These resolutions also make specific recommendations for Governments to seek relevant expertise in order to ensure the availability of reliable data on internally displaced persons.[8]

[4] United Nations publication, Sales No. 1953.XVII.10.

[5] Ibid., Sales No. E.76.XVII.18.

[6] *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*, can be found at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/SeriesM/SeriesM_58rev1e.pdf.

[7] E/CN.3/2016/14, para. 12.

[8] See Human Rights Council resolutions 20/9 and 32/11 on the human rights of internally displaced persons; General Assembly resolutions 68/180 and 70/165 on the protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons.

16. Lastly, the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/1, stress the need for capacity-building and improved statistics, including the increased "availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts" (Goal 17, target 18). Specific recommendations on refugee, asylum seeker and internally displaced persons statistics can serve as a critical instrument to enhance the statistical capacity of national authorities, thereby strengthening the evidence base for decision-making on the protection and assistance of all three groups. At the same time, improved statistics, including adequate disaggregation, in this area will enhance measuring progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, with a specific focus on vulnerable population groups.

III. Development of the documents

17. The set of international recommendations and the technical report, which are background documents related to the present report, have been developed through a collaborative effort by the members of the Expert Group, including the guidance of the Steering Committee. As mentioned above, membership in the Group is open to all national and international authorities and organizations with a stake in refugee and/or internally displaced persons statistics. The current members of the Group represent a great variety of regions and contexts and include a mix of members, some who joined the group out of personal interest and others who were specifically invited to join because of their known experience with refugee or internally displaced persons populations, their specific capacity and/or to cover additional geographic or developmental areas.

18. UNHCR and the Joint Internally Displaced Person Profiling Service served as secretariat of the Expert Group and were in charge of coordinating the work on the set of international recommendations (UNHCR) and the technical report, in consultation with the Steering Committee and the co-leaders on the work on individual chapters. The work on the set of international recommendations was mostly carried out by the members of the Steering Committee (UNHCR, Eurostat, Statistics Norway), while work on the technical report was led by the Joint Internally Displaced Person Profiling Service with support from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and Statistics Norway as co-chairs and chapter leads. As set out above, chapter groups for the different chapters of the set of international recommendations and a subgroup for the technical report were established during the first meeting of the Expert Group. Chapter leads were selected to be in charge of coordinating the work of the chapter groups.

19. All members of the Expert Group were invited to provide input and feedback throughout the process, especially to ensure that different regions and contexts were reflected in the recommendations. Since the Group includes more than 35 national statistical authorities, it was possible to identify and include various country-specific examples as case examples in the recommendations and technical report, illustrating how statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons can be integrated into national statistical systems. The ultimate goal was to ensure that the final recommendations were relevant and useful to the various national statistical authorities as well as to regional and international organizations.

20. The two meetings of the Expert Group and the additional meeting of the subgroup on internally displaced persons were held in order to ensure thorough

discussions on the content of the documents and agreement on the outstanding issues and final recommendations. Furthermore, two draft versions were circulated for comprehensive feedback within the Group, and there was extensive communication among the members of the Group to discuss the contents of the two documents.

21. The Steering Committee served as an advisory board throughout the process, clarifying questions and comments received whenever possible. It should be stressed, however, that the final documents do not reflecting the position of the Steering Committee or any other single organization or authority, but rather reflect a consolidated understanding and consensus on the part of the members of the entire Expert Group.

22. From 10 November to 10 December 2017, the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat conducted a global consultation on final drafts of the set of international recommendations and the technical report for all relevant authorities and offices of the States Members of the United Nations. In response to the feedback and comments received on the final drafts, the documents were modified and edited for submission to the Commission.

IV. International recommendations on refugee statistics

A. Need for international recommendations on refugee statistics

23. Statistics on refugees and asylum seekers are published regularly by national authorities and by regional and international organizations, including UNHCR and Eurostat. In the case of a number of countries, UNHCR collects and publishes such statistics on their behalf, until they have the capacity to produce their own statistics. There is a clear need for capacity-building and for addressing the challenges associated with the collection, compilation and presentation of data on refugees and asylum seekers, which affect the quality of published statistics. Improved statistics on these populations are crucial in order to ensure informed decision-making and evidence-based policies and programmes that will adequately serve their needs.

24. One existing challenge is the lack of comparability between the statistics on refugees and asylum seekers produced by different countries and across various displacement situations. This arises due to the inconsistency of terminology, concepts, definitions and classifications, as well as variation in the methods of data collection, compilation and presentation at the national and international levels. Data on refugees and asylum seekers are typically collected for administrative rather than statistical purposes, and the definitions employed reflect country-specific legislation, policies and practices.

25. In this regard, there is a need to more effectively differentiate, conceptually, between international migrants and refugees. In some situations, refugees might be seen as a subgroup of migrants, however, legally, protection-wise, as well as statistically, a refugee is not adequately covered under the term "migrant" and in some situations, refugees are clearly not migrants at all (for example, most Palestine refugees). This is also why there is a need for concrete recommendations on refugee statistics, in addition to the existing *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*.

26. There is also a need to improve the understanding of the concepts of flows and stocks of refugees and asylum seekers, and to build efficient information systems that can serve the needs of both administrative and official statistics. The measurement of

forced population movements in humanitarian crises presents unique technical, operational and political challenges, affecting the accuracy and reliability of available data. Refugees and asylum seekers are highly mobile, especially in ongoing humanitarian crises, and population distributions can change rapidly, affecting, among other things, sampling frames for surveys.

27. There are several gaps in official statistics, including a lack of basic demographic data on asylum seekers and socioeconomic data on refugees. The availability of data on basic characteristics of these populations would permit analysis of their socioeconomic well-being relative to general migrants and the population at large, as well as their degree of integration. There is also a need to maximize the use of available data sources (for example, by integrating questions on reasons for migration and seeking refugee status into censuses and other survey instruments) while at the same time advancing the use of new data sources (for example, spatial or big data).

28. There is limited connection between national statistics on refugees and asylum seekers, often managed within immigration authorities, and national statistics on migration and population. Additionally, there are significant variations across countries in terms of the size of forcibly displaced populations, the capacities of the national statistical and administrative systems and national policy priorities. In particular, capacity constraints in developing countries limit the scope and effectiveness of data collection and dissemination activities.

29. It is widely acknowledged that humanitarian and development approaches need to be aligned with each other and that actors working in these areas need to collaborate more effectively in order to facilitate, inter alia, the smooth transition from emergency situations to durable solutions for displaced populations. The work of the Expert Group on international recommendations for refugee statistics, by specifically involving national statistical authorities and building on their capacity, was aimed at bridging the gap between humanitarian and development work and promoting the production of better statistics to address the needs of persons of concern in both the short and long-term.

30. In another challenge to the work of statisticians working in this field, it should be noted that the extreme sensitivity of data on refugees and asylum seekers, and the importance of confidentiality and data protection in refugee statistics, may limit their access to information within administrative systems.

B. Outline of the international recommendations on refugee statistics

31. Based on the identified challenges, including the need for international standards and capacity-building in the area of refugee and asylum-seeker statistics, it was decided to develop a set of recommendations on refugee statistics. The recommendations are aimed at addressing the existing gaps by investigating, and providing recommendations and standards about, the following elements:

(a) The legal framework and refugee definitions;

(b) Defining refugees and refugee-related populations for the purpose of statistical measurement;

(c) Measuring the number of refugees;

(d) Measuring the well-being and integration of refugees and refugee-related populations;

(e) Coordination and strengthening of systems of refugee statistics.

32. In the recommendations, statistical definitions of the refugee population, including scope and the relevant stock and flow measures, are elaborated. Issues resolved in the recommendations include the difference between migrants and refugees and the principle that, while recognizing that there is some overlap when producing statistics, refugees are not simply a subset of migrants and, in some cases, may not even be migrants at all. Three categories have been developed to describe the different subsets of the population in scope, including: persons in need of international protection; persons with a refugee background; and persons who have returned from abroad after seeking international protection.

33. The minimum set of classificatory variables, basic statistics and key indicators, to be collected and reported on the different population groups, have been defined in the recommendations. The concepts and classifications of refugees and asylum seekers are translated into core questions that enable the identification of these populations in data sources in a practical and cost-effective way. Because of the complexity of legal definitions in this area, a simplification process was used to arrive at a workable sequence of questions that can be used in surveys and censuses.

34. The recommendations include some concrete discussions about the usefulness of indicators derived from general household and labour force surveys in providing meaningful results for refugees, considering the need for disaggregation by refugee status and an adequate sample size and design. It is also recommended that surveys and censuses include refugee camps in their sampling frames. Furthermore, the possibility of data matching, the integration of survey and census data with administrative data and record linkage using both country administrative data and register data from UNHCR and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, are addressed. The recommendations stress the need for an integrated data infrastructure.

35. The recommendations also include examples and guidance for assessing the well-being and integration of refugees and, in this regard, take into consideration the importance of benchmark populations within the host country, including the general migrant population in the host country. The recommendations also discuss the importance of standardizing indicators of well-being and integration so that they may be internationally comparable and allow an assessment of the success of integration efforts across regions and countries. A concrete list of recommended indicators for measuring well-being and integration, linked with the comprehensive refugee response framework and the Sustainable Development Goals indicators, is included in the recommendations.

36. The coordination across national statistical systems, spanning different statistical agencies and taking differences between centralized and decentralized systems into account, is also addressed in the recommendations. It is recommended that the national statistical office or primary statistical authority maintain overall responsibility for the integrity and validity of all official statistics and coordinate the process, ensuring effective planning, coordination and dissemination. In addition, the need for having an appropriate national legal framework in place and adhering to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics is stressed.

37. Recommendations are also made with respect to metadata standards, data sharing and the dissemination of refugee statistics, and methods of evaluating statistical systems and quality assurance for refugee statistics are addressed. Examples from regional organizations, such as the regional economic commissions

and the European Union, are used to discuss existing recommendations on statistics and different coordinating roles. Moreover, the need to engage ministers and senior politicians at the international and regional levels to elevate refugee statistics as a priority for political and government agendas is addressed.

38. The last chapter of the recommendations addresses improved coordination within international and national systems and provides recommendations on establishing an appropriate governance body to ensure the harmonization of concepts, definitions and reporting on refugee statistics; Member States should be included in these deliberations. A model that could be followed in this regard is that of the United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation.

V. Technical report on the statistics of internally displaced persons

A. The need for a way forward to internationally comparable standards on internally displaced persons statistics

39. Internally displaced persons account for the largest share of displaced populations globally, and there is growing recognition of the need for accurate and actionable data about them in order to inform national responses and support policy processes. However, in collecting statistics on internally displaced persons, there are particular conceptual and measurement challenges, and guidance on this topic is scarce. There is a need for the development of standards for quality and more comparable statistics on internally displaced persons.

40. Among the few national statistical offices or national statistics services that produce and publish statistics on internal displacement, notable variation in the specifications used for statistical measurement is evident. The reasons that drive the collection of data on internally displaced persons differ from context to context, and in the majority of contexts, much of the statistics collected on are gathered for operational purposes (for example, for providing humanitarian assistance) and are often not defined as official statistics. Oftentimes, operational statistics on internally displaced persons simplify or distort specifications, are collected by different actors with various needs or are not systematically shared or reported on.

41. Another key challenge of in the collection of statistics on internally displaced persons is the operationalization of concepts that have not yet been standardized. Various practices for translating the definition of an internally displaced person into a statistically measurable unit exist due to differences in national legal frameworks and their applications in data collection. Although in many contexts statistics depart from the comprehensive definition of internally displaced persons established in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, there are important commonalities, as well as a need for improved practice, in this area. Developing a unified statistical framework for this population remains feasible, helps to provide clarity regarding conceptual challenges across contexts and improves the comparability of data.

42. In order to be useful for decision-making, statistics on internally displaced persons need to be aligned, interoperable and of sufficient quality. This, however, requires clear standards and related tools for the production of official statistics. Determining whether a person is or is not internally displaced is an important first step in the collection of quality statistics on internally displaced persons. Collecting data on the characteristics of internally displaced persons can also illuminate the

socioeconomic situation of these populations, thereby informing appropriate operational and policy response. Quality statistics on internally displaced persons also allow for an analysis of progress towards the achievement of durable solutions to displacement, and support the role of Governments in providing protection and assistance to them.

43. The production of official statistics requires effective coordination. Without coordination, data collection efforts can be duplicated, sometimes resulting in the existence of competing data and divergent results owing to the use of incompatible specifications and measurements. Effective mechanisms are required to align quality standards and to regulate methodologies acceptable for official statistics, to ensure best use of resources and to disseminate statistics on internally displaced persons for all relevant users and the general public. Many types of coordination mechanisms exist at the national level, differing in their mandates, composition and organization. They also differ in how influential they are. At present, international coordination of statistics on internally displaced persons is limited, and current practice shows little comparability of such statistics internationally. Similar to challenges observed at the national level, the way the international community defines and measures internal displacement internationally is not aligned.

44. While some initiatives exist, and several international organizations are committed to improving the production of quality statistics on internally displaced persons, there has been no clear way forward yet. This is why the mandate of the Expert Group included the development of a technical report, as described below. The drafting of the technical report marks the very first time that a collaborative effort has been undertaken to define a way forward towards the development of comparable international standards for statistics on internally displaced persons. The first set of recommendations will need to be refined over time, with the intention of leading to a more detailed set of internationally agreed-upon recommendations on internally displaced persons statistics.

B. Outline of the technical report on the development of statistics on internally displaced persons

45. Owing to the difficulties in conceptualizing and comparing the number of internally displaced persons in statistical terms, the need for a technical report outlining the way forward to the development of comparable international standards for statistics on internally displaced persons was expressed and specifically requested by the Statistical Commission in its decision 47/111. Based on that decision, the technical report has been developed, taking stock of the following elements:

(a) The legal and policy framework;

(b) Defining internally displaced persons for the purpose of statistical measurement;

(c) Collecting numbers on internally displaced persons: considerations and sources;

(d) Collecting characteristics on internally displaced persons: challenges and applications;

(e) Coordination systems at national and international levels;

(f) Recommendations towards the establishment of a statistical framework on internally displaced persons.

46. The technical report primarily takes stock of the existing practice on collection of official statistics on internally displaced persons. In addition, it makes recommendations towards a framework for such statistics, with the aim of paving the way for the production of comparable, quality statistics on these populations across different contexts in the future.

47. As a starting point, the technical report considers the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in order to define and delineate the characteristics of internally displaced persons in legal terms and how they could be translated into statistically measurable terms. While the Guiding Principles, which are well reflected in regional and national laws and instruments, provide a good basis for arriving at a statistical definition, additional criteria are identified in the report to ensure that internally displaced persons can be statistically differentiated from other population groups.

48. The report also discusses international data quality standards, as outlined, for example, in the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and the specific challenges related to the collection of comparable statistics on internally displaced persons. It describes the differences between stock and flow measures in the context of internally displaced persons and critically reflects on the variety of definitions used in current practice by national statistical authorities. It outlines the different context-specific challenges that hamper the collection of comparable and high-quality data on internally displaced persons and proposes a way forward towards international standards on the collection of statistics on this population group.

49. The report also describes and makes recommendations on the possible future use of different data sources for the production of internally displaced persons statistics, including national censuses, administrative records and registers and surveys, as well as operational, qualitative and big data. The report recommends that different types of statistics be collected on internally displaced persons, including numbers and important characteristics for the production of data that is relevant for effective policymaking and response to the situations faced by internally displaced persons.

50. When looking at the characteristics of internally displaced persons, the technical report specifies how they can be identified in official statistics and reflects on the capacities of different data sources to do so. The report also provides examples of indicators that can be used for measurement, for example, progress towards durable solutions, and provides concrete resources for identifying relevant and comparable indicators to be measured. Furthermore, the need for comparative analysis to fully understand the displacement context is emphasized and elaborated on.

51. By providing a number of examples, the technical report addresses the importance of coordination at the national and international levels in order to improve the collection of statistics on internally displaced persons. It stresses the role of national strategies for the development of statistics and yearly statistical plans in helping to mainstream the production of these statistics and to enhance the availability of comparative data with non-displaced populations. Including statistics on internally displaced persons in the mandates of national statistics services will facilitate adherence to international statistical quality standards, even in cases where the primary focal point for data production is not a statistical agency.

52. The technical report stresses the responsibility of national Governments to organize statistical production and provide capacity for it through human resources,

training and funding. It is acknowledged, however, that the international community should support the development of quality statistics on displacement. The intention is to establish participatory and transparent processes that build on best practices for the production of statistics, and also to establish cooperation between displacement-affected areas and international organizations, as well as between countries facing similar challenges.

53. The technical report also draws on technical elements of the set of international recommendations, for while they are two separate documents, they built on each other and cover some common elements, such as quality standards for statistics, the advantages and disadvantages of different data sources, the responsibilities on national level and the importance of coordination within and between systems at the national and international levels.

VI. The way forward

54. Following the presentation of the set of recommendations and the technical report, the Expert Group will continue its work on refugee and internally displaced persons statistics. Member States and organizations wishing to take part in the future work of the Group are invited to join and to contribute to the next steps in the process. In the upcoming phase, the Group intends to produce the following two documents:

- A refugee statistics compilers manual (to be submitted to the Statistical Commission at its fiftieth session in March 2019);
- Refined recommendations and a compilers manual, including a set of internationally comparable standards on internally displaced persons statistics (to be submitted to the Statistical Commission at its fiftieth session in March 2019).

55. The main goal of the Expert Group is to develop international recommendations on refugee and internally displaced persons statistics to be used by national statistical authorities and international actors alike. As part of these recommendations, internationally comparable indicators are developed, which will improve the quality and comparability of national and international statistics to provide a basis for evidence-based decision-making and planning on different levels. The refugee and the internally displaced persons statistics compilers manuals will entail concrete operational instructions for national as well as regional statistical systems, with the aim of advancing statistical capacity at different levels, including through the support of international partners.

56. The aim of the two compilers manuals is to provide operational instructions on the implementation of the set of international recommendations and the technical report. Through concrete recommendations and guidance, the compilers manuals and the recommendations aim to strengthen the national capacity of the countries hosting asylum seekers, refugees and internally displaced persons and to assist them in collecting and disseminating high-quality statistics on those populations.

57. In addition to their work under the mandate of the Expert Group, members also aim at engaging in concrete capacity-building activities, in line with the international recommendations and in support of countries that may face difficulties in implementing the standards.

VII. Points for discussion

58. The Statistical Commission is invited to consider the following two background documents with implications for States Members of the United Nations:

(a) International recommendations on refugee statistics;

(b) Technical report on statistics on internally displaced persons;

59. In addition, the Commission is invited to discuss and approve the future work of the Expert Group, in particular with regard to:

(a) Development of a refugee statistics compilers manual;

(b) Development of revised recommendations on internally displaced persons statistics and an extension of the mandate of the Expert Group to include the development of an internally displaced persons statistics compilers manual.